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HITLER'S

Third Reich

Volume

9

Monthly

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von Ribbentrop

Hitler's Foreign Minister

Leibstandarte SS

The Führer's personal guard

Battle of the Atlantic

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The women's camp

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Polish capital destroyed

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HITLER'S Third Reich

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Hitler hated Communism. The 'Commissar order' issued during the 1941 invasion of the USSR called for the extermination of Communist party officials, together with anyone resisting German occupation forces. Anyone charged with such activity was executed out of hand, without the benefit of a trial.

Hitler's Vengeance



Hitler's driving force was vengeance – he neither forgave nor forgot. His paranoia and hatred brutalised a generation of Europeans during his bloody twelve year reign.

HITLER LIVED for vengeance. Vengeance against the Jews, Communists and other internal enemies he blamed for Germany's defeat in 1918; revenge against the Allied powers that dictated the hateful terms of the Versailles treaty and personal vendettas against men and women who dared stand up to him.

Left: The peak of Hitler's powers came with the defeat of France. The Führer took great satisfaction in the victory of the Wehrmacht, seeing the occupation of Paris as revenge for the humiliations inflicted on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles.

From the last days of World War I, when he lay recovering from British poison gas, Hitler devoted his life to revenge. His speeches and the tirades inside *Mein Kampf* are peppered with references to 'final showdowns' with the former Allies, the Bolsheviks and, of course, the Jews. When he came to power, it would be payback time.

The first man to notice Hitler's talent for public speaking was Captain Karl Mayr. He commanded the 'information unit' of *Bayerische Reichswehr Gruppenkommando Nr. 4*, the counter-revolutionary or 'white' army units that crushed the Munich republic



Above: Gregor Strasser, pictured here in 1930 with Roland Freisler, was a committed social revolutionary who was the most powerful figure in the Nazi Party after Hitler. Strasser's desire for change brought him into conflict with the more pragmatic Hitler. He was regarded as a serious threat by Hitler, who had him murdered in 'the Night of the Long Knives'.

Left: Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher sought to boost the economy and fight unemployment through an alliance of the left wing of the NSDAP and the German Trades Union Federation. The leftist Social Democratic Party leadership forced the unions to retreat from any alliance, and Hindenburg dismissed him on 28 January 1933. The former General was another of Hitler's 'Long Knives' victims, murdered along with his wife.

in 1919. Mayr's task was indoctrination: countering the Marxists' propaganda with right-wing nationalist ideology. In June 1919 he noted down some useful men among the Bavarian soldiery; men who informed on comrades sympathetic to the revolutionaries. One was 'Hittler, Adolf' (sic) who joined a class in 'anti-Bolshevik studies' at Munich university from 5-12 June. Hitler was a star pupil and became one of 26 soldiers appointed as 'instructors' at the Lechfeld camp, near Augsburg, where German prisoners-of-war were sent by the Allied powers to await their discharge from the army. Mayr's men were to 'disinfect' them of Bolshevism, and inculcate 'correct' nationalist views.

Hitler head-hunted

The former prisoners received a five-day course of lectures beginning on 20 August. One speaker stood out immediately: it was here that Adolf Hitler discovered his demagogic power. At last he had a purpose. Mayr later described him as a "stray dog looking for a master" and observed, prophetically, "he was totally unconcerned about the German people". He preached revenge: against the Jews, the Bolsheviks and the Allies. In his mind the needs of Germany and Adolf Hitler had already fused.

Captain Mayr lived to rue the day that he

had created this monster. Disenchanted with the far right, he took up arms on behalf of the social democrats, becoming a leading figure in the *Reichsbanner*, the paramilitary organisation affiliated to that party. To Hitler this was base treachery. And Hitler had a Sicilian memory for such villainy. Mayr fled Germany in 1933, but was evidently tracked down by the SD. He was found in France after the 1940 campaign and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. After years of privation, he died in early 1945.

Long Knives

Hitler was the first German Chancellor to have his predecessor murdered. On the night of 30 June, 1934, 'the Night of the Long Knives', six Nazi gunmen raided the home of Kurt von Schleicher and killed both the ex-Chancellor and his wife. This was the most notorious, but not the only, act of vengeance that took place during the slaughter of the SA leadership.

Schleicher had retired from public life after Hitler's elevation to power, but the Führer had never forgiven him for the events of 13 August 1932. Then, fresh from his greatest electoral triumph, he had gone to the presidential palace for a 20 minute meeting with President Hindenburg. Hitler refused to enter a coalition government, continuing his 'all or nothing' policy: only the Chancellorship would do. Hindenburg

refused. Schleicher released a communiqué, revealing that the revered Field Marshal had interviewed Hitler standing up, lambasted the former NCO for the criminal acts of his stormtroopers and rebuffed his political demands. And Schleicher's official account was issued with suspicious speed, hitting the street long before the Nazis' version of events. Schleicher posed no threat to Hitler by the summer of 1934, but to a man obsessed with revenge, this counted for nothing.

Another man who had long ceased to offer any threat to Hitler was 72-year-old Gustav von Kahr, president of Bavaria from 1917-24 and head of Bavaria's supreme court from 1924-27. In his 1923 Beer Hall putsch, Hitler had forced von Kahr to endorse the uprising – at gun point – but neglected to have him guarded. Von Kahr escaped, called in the Reichswehr and the farcical rebellion was crushed. During the Röhm Purge, von Kahr was abducted from his home in Munich. He was found stabbed to death on a roadside near Dachau.

Bombing Britain

Hitler's acts of personal revenge were soon eclipsed by far greater crimes. Vengeance governed his foreign policy and eventually, his strategic direction of the war. After the RAF bombed Berlin in 1940, it was his shrill declaration of revenge that diverted the

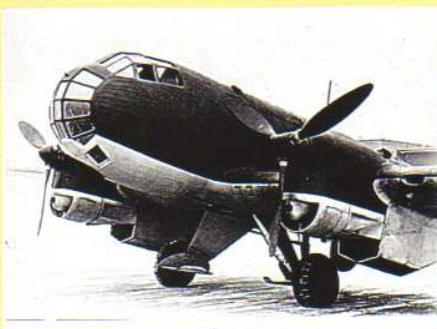
Baedeker Raids

'Baedeker raids' was the collective name for the Luftwaffe's air offensive against English cultural targets between April and June 1942. Mounted in reply to British bomber raids, they were announced at a press conference, where a German foreign office official stated that the Luftwaffe would bomb every English building marked with three stars in Karl Baedeker's tourist guidebook.

The attacks were launched on Hitler's direct orders, in retaliation for the RAF's area bombing of the civilian populations in the historic German cities of Lübeck, Rostock, and subsequently Cologne. These attacks were the first steps in the strategic bomber campaign – at this time Britain's only offensive capability against the German heartland.

The English cities targeted in the limited operations, all carried out at night, were Bath, Canterbury, Exeter, Norwich and York. The Luftwaffe, over-committed in other theatres of operation, did not have the capacity to inflict a sustained and damaging assault on Britain. Casualties to the civilian population were mercifully light, totalling 1,637 killed and 1,760 injured. These figures pale into insignificance against the losses inflicted by the British thousand bomber raids which were just about to start over the Reich.

Right: One of the aircraft used in the Baedeker raids was the high-flying Junkers Ju 86P. The original Ju 86 bomber had been obsolete since the beginning of the war, but the 'P' model flew so high that it was virtually immune from interception. Even so, it had little effect, as there were too few in service and their accuracy bombing from 40,000 feet was abysmal.



Below: Heinkel He 111s provided the bulk of the forces used on the Baedeker raids, but with the Luftwaffe's resources being stretched to the limit the bomber fleet could achieve little over the British Isles.



Above: During the night of 28/29 March 1942, 200 RAF bombers dropped 300 tonnes of incendiaries on Lübeck. It took fire fighters a day and a half to control the fires in the medieval heart of the city, which was gutted. Hitler ordered his own 'terror raids' in reprisal.

Below: The feeble nature of Hitler's attempt at vengeance was shown on 30 May 1942. On that night Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris launched the RAF's first 'thousand bomber' raid on Cologne, with wave upon wave of aircraft reducing parts of the city to ruin.



HITLER'S THIRD REICH 3



Sick and more than half mad at the end of the war, Hitler dreamt of a Wagnerian Götterdämmerung. His desire for Germany to be destroyed as his funeral pyre were only thwarted by Armaments Minister Albert Speer.



Luftwaffe from its attacks on British airfields and against London instead. This at the very time RAF Fighter Command was beginning to doubt whether its southern airbases could remain operational very much longer.

In retaliation for RAF Bomber Command's raids on Lübeck and other German towns, Hitler demanded German attacks on British 'cultural' towns and cities, the so-called 'Baedeker raids'. Hitler's insistence on revenge led to the 'commando order' whereby Allied special forces soldiers were shot out of hand if captured. Its consequences for Germans trying to surrender later on can be imagined.

Hitler's vindictiveness permeated the ranks of the German army in the east. Hitler himself decreed the deaths of hundreds of 'Bolshevik sub-humans' if the partisans so much as injured a single German soldier.

The German army's culture of genocidal intolerance stemmed from their leader, to whom every man had sworn personal loyalty. For two years the front lines swung back and forth across Russia, from the Arctic circle to the shores of the Caspian sea. But by the autumn of 1943, the Germans were retreating, knowing they would never return. They left a trail of utter devastation behind

them: poisoning water sources, demolishing every building, ringing the trees and slaughtering the livestock they did not steal. If Hitler could not have his eastern empire, neither would anyone else.

Not every German soldier remained true to that oath of course. On 20 July 1944 Hitler narrowly survived assassination at the hands of Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, who left a time-bomb in a meeting room at Rastenburg. Hitler's wrath knew no bounds. Interrogations and subsequent executions were carried out with the utmost barbarity. Only Hitler's suicide ended his vengeance against the July plotters: as the Allied armies closed in, so the surviving prisoners were dragged out of their cells to be killed, some within days of their camps being liberated.

Germany must burn

By March 1945 Hitler directed his vengeance not just at the plotters, but at everyone who had failed him: the entire German people in fact. Curiously, his orders issued on 19 and 30 March, the so-called 'Nero decrees' were the very measures proposed by the most unforgiving elements within the Allied leadership. Like them, he proposed the total destruction of Germany. All heavy industry

was to be blown up, bridges demolished, railway lines torn up, waterworks destroyed. Germany was to be knocked back to medieval days, with no more than a subsistence economy.

His empire reduced to a subterranean bunker beneath the bombed-out ruins of his chancellery, Hitler issued orders that would condemn post-war Germany to years of needless suffering. It was his final vengeance against a people that had failed him. To this grotesque egomaniac, the Herculean efforts of the German armed forces meant nothing. Fortunately for Germany, Albert Speer dedicated his last weeks of freedom to countermanning these insane orders. Rushing around the shrinking Reich, he persuaded Nazi officials to 'lose' instructions, or delay demolition orders until too late.

Hitler's orders animated the last stand in the centre of Berlin. The defenders of the last Nazi bastion were guided more by the spirit of the Freikorps than by rational military calculation. At Hitler's orders, Nazi 'political officers' and squads of SS men executed people out of hand, with no semblance of legal process. Hitler's Germany ended as it began, in acts of nihilistic violence with no purpose beyond death and destruction.



20 July Plot

"They must all be hanged like cattle"

The most long-standing opposition to Hitler centred upon the senior Reichswehr soldiers who had been retired in 1933. They included General Ludwig Beck. After several fruitless attempts on Hitler's life in the fall of 1938, the winter of 1939-40 and in 1943, the conspirators' cause was lifted by the recruitment of *Oberstleutnant* Claus von Stauffenberg.

This cultured, academically brilliant and charismatic soldier had resolved upon killing Hitler whilst recovering from wounds received in North Africa. Upon returning to duty he was given a staff job which afforded him occasional access to Hitler's conferences at Rastenburg in East Prussia. The attempt was fixed for Tuesday 20 July 1944.

Stauffenberg planted the bomb which detonated successfully. The Führer 'providentially' emerged from the rubble, singed but otherwise unscathed.

The coup might still have succeeded, but for the dithering of senior plotters Witzleben and Beck in Berlin. Stauffenberg, along with fellow conspirators Olbricht, Hoepfner and Beck all died on the evening of the plot. SS commando Otto Skorzeny, who happened to have been in

Berlin at the time, prevented further executions so that the extent and details of the plot could be uncovered.

Hitler's maniacal fury powered an insatiable desire for revenge. "I will put their wives and children into concentration camps," he ranted, "and will show them no mercy." He kept his word.

Himmler and Kaltenbrunner were tasked with rooting out every last conspirator, who were to be tortured mercilessly. Hitler turned the civil justice system into an instrument of his hate. After a wave of arrests the victims were given over to the Peoples Court under the ranting sadist (and former Communist) Roland Freisler.

At a farcical series of trials, in which judge and defence attorney vied to outdo each other in the condemnation of the accused, the latter were almost always sentenced to death. Execution was carried out by slow strangulation, the victims being suspended by piano wire from meat hooks. The performances were filmed for Hitler's viewing pleasure.

Some 200 conspirators were executed whilst over 7,000 were arrested. Most were sent to concentration camps, never to be seen again.

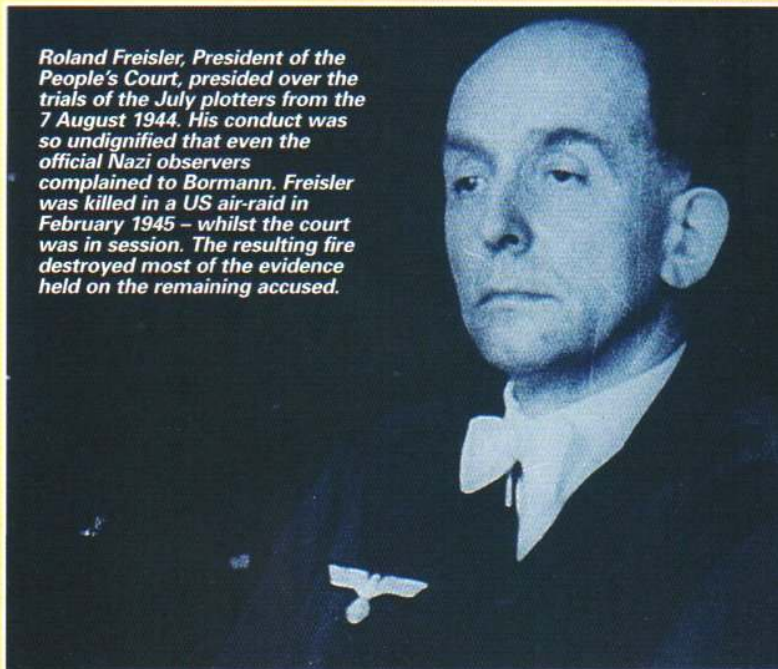
Below: Claus von Stauffenberg meets with the Führer at Rastenburg five days before the coup attempt. Had the rest of the plotters been of equal drive and determination, the attempt on Hitler's life might well have succeeded. But the Führer survived, to wreak a terrible vengeance.



Below: Carl Goerdeler was the civilian head of the anti-Hitler movement. After the failed plot the former Mayor of Leipzig was sheltered by friends in spite of the 1 million Reichsmark price on his head. He was eventually caught by the Gestapo on 12 August. Sentenced to death by the People's Court, he was executed in February 1945. On Hitler's orders he was decapitated by an executioner using a hand axe.



Roland Freisler, President of the People's Court, presided over the trials of the July plotters from the 7 August 1944. His conduct was so undignified that even the official Nazi observers complained to Bormann. Freisler was killed in a US air-raid in February 1945 – whilst the court was in session. The resulting fire destroyed most of the evidence held on the remaining accused.





Female prisoners repair bomb damage near Ravensbrueck. Most of the 130,000 inmates who passed through the camp worked as labourers.

Ravensbrueck

Although the majority of camp inmates were male, increasing numbers of female opponents of the Nazi regime called for a camp specifically for women. It was set up at Ravensbrueck in 1938, and quickly proved to be as brutal and murderous as any of the other exclusively male camps.

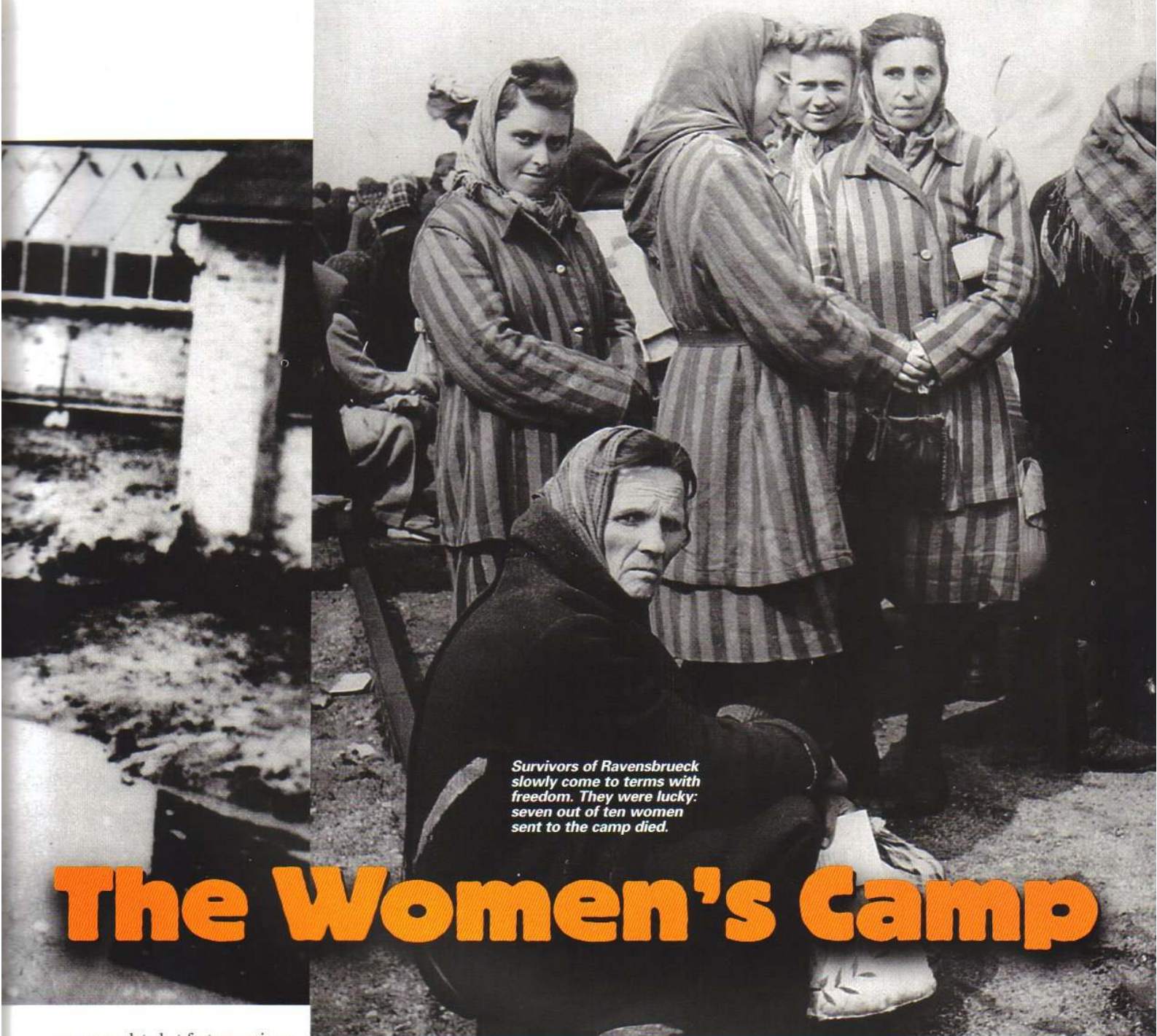
ESTABLISHED near the village of the same name, 90 kilometres north of Berlin, the camp at Ravensbrueck could have been idyllic. Located on the shores of Lake Schwed with forests and lakes all around, it would have been perfect as an 'away from it all' summer retreat. But it was no holiday camp, and the people who stayed there in the late 1930s and early 1940s had no choice as they suffered the torments of hell.

Nazi Germany was not a place where women could express themselves politically.

A woman's place was in the home, where she was expected to feed her man and breed her children. As a result there were few women incarcerated in the first wave of arrests and arbitrary imprisonment which followed Hitler's seizure of power.

But even in Germany there were women who wanted more than *Kinder, Kirche, and Kuche*. Women like Rosa Luxembourg had played a prominent part in the communist upheaval after World War I, and it soon became clear that there were female opponents of the Nazis too.

At first, the small number of women detainees could be



Survivors of Ravensbrueck slowly come to terms with freedom. They were lucky: seven out of ten women sent to the camp died.

The Women's Camp

accommodated at fortress prisons like Lichtenberg. But the number of arrests mounted, especially when the Gestapo began targeting religious opponents of the regime. It became clear that a camp for women would have to be established.

BUILDING THE CAMP

The SS chose Ravensbrueck because it was in an out-of-the-way spot, but which could be reached from Berlin fairly quickly via the rail link to the nearby town of Fürstenberg. In 1938, 500 prisoners were sent from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp to begin

clearing ground for the new camp. They built 14 barrack blocks, together with the usual kitchen block, roll-call area, detention centre, infirmary and guard housing.

The camp was officially opened on 15 May 1939, and on 19 May the first prisoner transport arrived from Lichtenberg. Also transferring from Lichtenberg was the Commandant, SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Max Kogel, who would take over the new camp. The transport consisted of around 900 prisoners, prominent among whom were Jehovah's Witnesses.

Four hundred Gypsies arrived ten days later, after a nationwide operation the Gestapo called 'Crime Prevention' but which was in fact aimed strictly at what the Nazi racial laws classed a "racially distinct minority with alien blood."

By the end of the year, Germany was at war, and the first Polish prisoners had arrived, taking the total number of detainees up to 2,300.

Ravensbrueck was run along standard concentration camp lines, but with the addition of 150 *Aufseherinnen*, or female overseers, to supplement the

"At Ravensbrueck I saw women the Germans had used as guinea pigs for their experiments: some had their spinal chords removed, others their bone marrow, others their genitals."

**Eyewitness account
Report of the Soviet
General Staff
Given at Nuremberg**



Left: The SS profited from the inmates' work in the camp's own cloth and leather concern. It had workshops for sewing, tailoring, shoe-making and handicrafts. There was even a furrier's workshop on the site.

Above: Although skilled workers were used in many of the camps activities, labour for the majority of inmates was hard, physical and backbreaking. Children above the age of 12 were expected to work alongside their mothers.



Left: Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler inspects the female overseers at Ravensbrueck. These women were particularly brutal to prisoners in their charge.

for the eliciting information from political prisoners, by brutal interrogation and torture if necessary.

Once in the system, inmates became the responsibility of the 'preventative arrest' department. This was responsible for everyday affairs in the camp and for organising outside work parties. The senior female overseer was subordinate to the camp head, and she assigned the *Aufseherinnen* to work as block warders and labour overseers.

The prisoners themselves lived in the barracks blocks. These were originally designed to house up to 270 women, but by 1945 they held 600 and sometimes more. Prison uniform was a blue and grey striped dress of coarse fabric. A thin coat was issued between October and march, together with stockings and footwear – generally clogs.

SHORT RATIONS

At the beginning of the war, prisoners were fed a daily ration of 500 grams of bread, about half a litre of vegetable soup, and potatoes. At weekends the ration was sometimes eked out with sausages, cheese and jam. By

1942, however, the bread ration had dropped to less than 200 grams per day. The soup – more watery than nutritious – was made from turnips and cabbage, and the weekend treat of jam was thinned down. By 1944 the poor diet, allied to heavy labour and minimal healthcare meant that malnutrition, and the diseases of malnutrition, were rife.

Health care was a misnomer, as all the SS medical staff cared about was whether the woman reporting sick was capable of work. Unless they were literally at death's door, sick inmates were sent back to work as 'malingerers'. Lung diseases were rife, as were heart and kidney disorders. Injuries were common, as was frostbite in winter, and most women inmates displayed ulcers and abscesses due to the poor hygiene in the camp. There was also the ever present risk of epidemic, with the internees sleeping three or four to a plank bed in the overcrowded barracks.

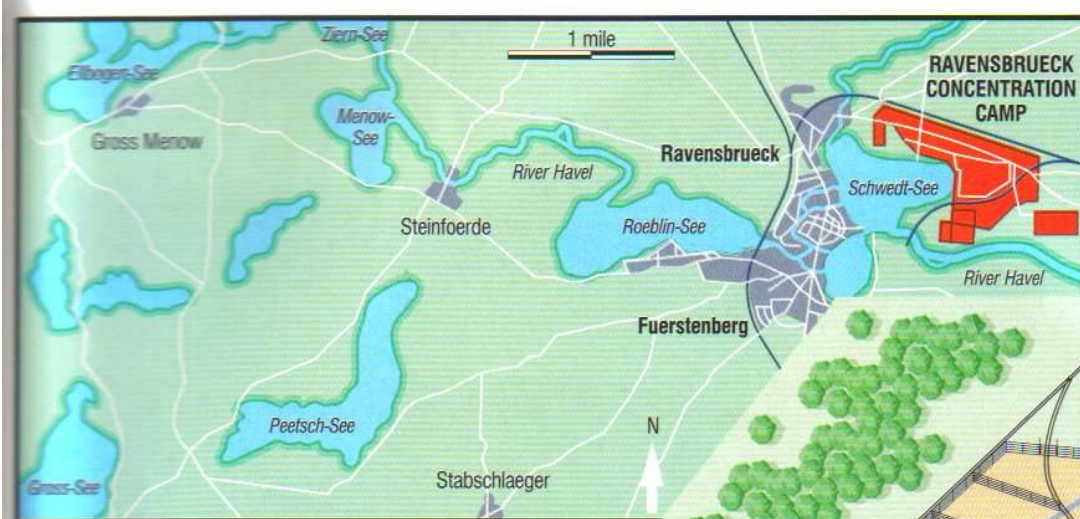
Although the whole camp was an instrument of terror, the detention block took that terror to unimaginable heights. Known to the inmates as the bunker, the block had 78 cells on two floors. The cells were generally bare, with a folding plank to sleep on. People could be sent to the

Totenkopf guard force. Surviving prisoners record that these women soon overcame any inhibitions and quickly became as cruel and brutal as their male colleagues. Many *Aufseherinnen* came from poor homes and lacked any serious education. Most had come to work for the SS because the job offered better pay and conditions than working on the land or in factories, generally their only other alternatives. From 1942 Ravensbrueck also trained female overseers for other camps, a total of 3,500 *Aufseherinnen* being passed through the programme in two years.

As with most concentration camps, the administration of Ravensbrueck was divided into departments. These included the commandant's office, the political department, the 'preventative arrest' section, a medical department and an administration department. Outside the camp administration proper there was a motor pool, maintenance department, and the SS guard battalion (which numbered 1,000 troops by the end of the war).

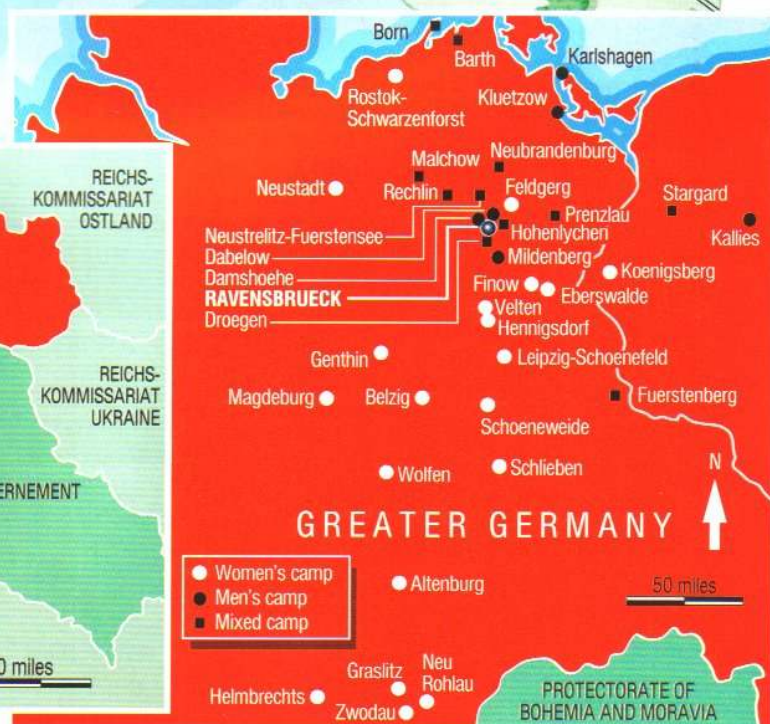
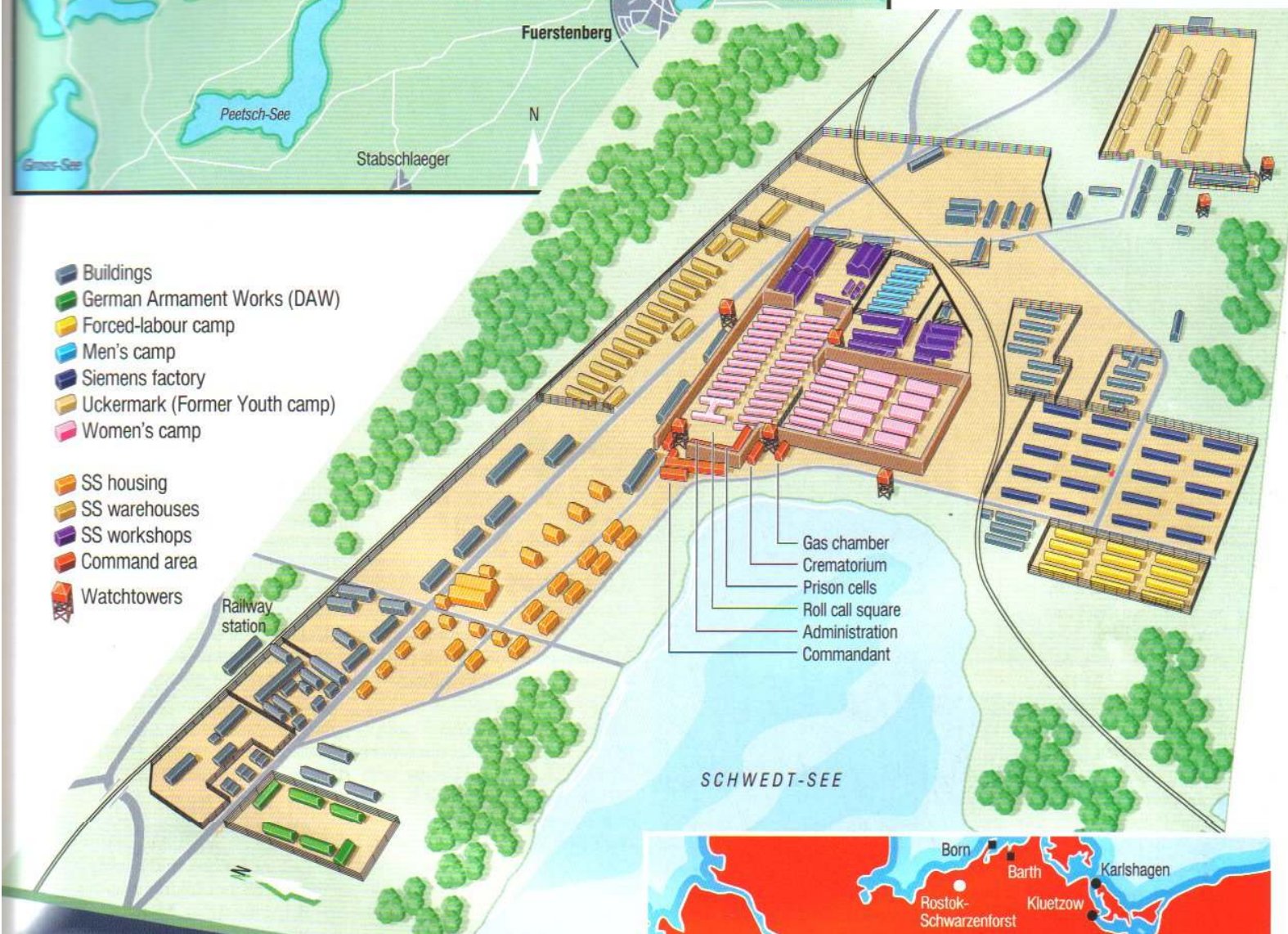
The political department handled the transportation, reception and registration of prisoners. It was also responsible

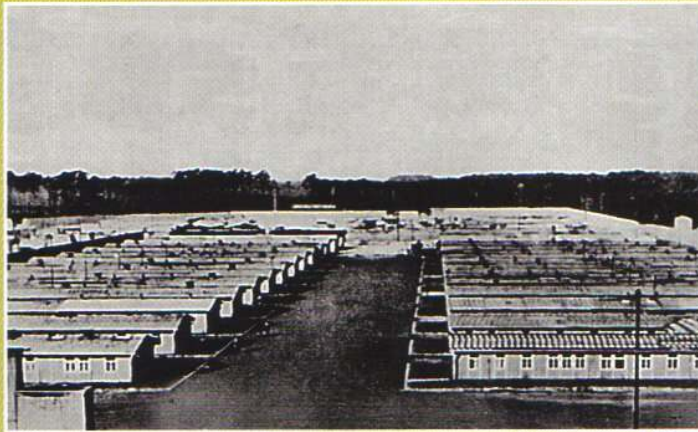
RAVENSBRUECK COMPLEX 1944/5



- Buildings
- German Armament Works (DAW)
- Forced-labour camp
- Men's camp
- Siemens factory
- Uckermark (Former Youth camp)
- Women's camp

- SS housing
- SS warehouses
- SS workshops
- Command area
- Watchtowers





Above: The wooden barrack blocks of the women's camp at Ravensbrueck followed the same general pattern as was used in other sites. The camp was originally intended to hold 2,000 women, but by the middle of the war these buildings housed more than 26,000 female internees and foreign prisoners.

Below: As the camp is completed at the end of 1938, camp inmates help to build the SS accommodation. The camp guards were mostly peasant or working-class Germans, for whom the relatively high pay and less than arduous work as a guard were major incentives.



bunker for a wide variety of 'crimes' – political activity or refusing to work on war projects were harshly dealt with, but writing a poem or having a badly-made bed was often enough.

The overseers in the cells were particularly brutal. Standard punishment after corporal punishment was officially introduced in 1940 was 25 strokes of a birch or cane. These were administered to prisoners lashed to a special beating block. Overseer Dorothea Binz, perhaps the most brutal of all the female guards, used a variety of devices including belts, high-pressure hoses and her two dogs which were trained to bite prisoners.

EXPANSION

From the beginning of the concentration camp system, hard physical labour was seen as one element of the regime. But with the outbreak of war the number of people being held soared, providing a pool of cheap labour which could be used to further the war effort – and which would enrich the SS in the process.

Ravensbrueck was no exception, and was enlarged several times. By the end of 1941, it housed 12,000 prisoners, and in 1942 numbers increased with the arrival of several transports of Russian women.

"Binz took me to the showers and worked me over with high-pressure water sprays. When I tried to protect myself, she would call in her dogs to bite me. Binz 'gave me a shower' of this sort twice a week."

**Stanislava Szencykova
Ravensbrueck survivor**

Expansion thereafter was rapid: by the end of 1943 there were 40,000 prisoners registered at Ravensbrueck, and a year later numbers reached 80,000.

But not all of these were in the camp at any one time: indeed, those working at the camp were a minority. Most of the prisoners were farmed out to satellite labour camps. At its height in 1944 the permanent population of Ravensbrueck itself was 'only' around 25,000, the remainder of the registered prisoners being worked to death elsewhere.

The main SS concern at Ravensbrueck was its Cloth and Leather Company. By 1942 more than 5,000 women were working

11 hours a day to turn out uniforms, leather goods, fur coats, knitwear, straw goods and handicrafts. Turnover by the end of that year was more than a million marks.

SUB-CAMPS

Ravensbrueck was the administrative centre of a spreading network of sub-camps – usually attached to military manufacturing sites – as far afield as Bavaria and Bohemia. By the end of the war there were at least 34 main sub-camps, with as many as 70 smaller sites. In addition the SS hired out Ravensbrueck workers to farms and estates in the neighbourhood, charging RM1.5 per day for labourers and RM2 for semi-skilled workers.

In 1941, the SS added a camp for men to the Ravensbrueck complex, though this was officially a satellite of Sachsenhausen. This held around 12,500 inmates at its height.

Originally, the standard method of execution at Ravensbrueck was a bullet in the back of the neck, though later women were disposed of by poison injections. In 1942, some prisoners from the camp were being used in medical experiments, while others were dealt with by the euthanasia programme which saw the first use of poison gas in executions.

Every two or three weeks prisoners unable to work were sent to the nearby camp at Uckermark – formerly a youth camp. They were told that it was to allow them to recover their health. In fact, most were gassed in special execution vans, and the few who reached the Uckermark site were often locked in barracks and starved to death. In 1944 the SS built a gas chamber at Ravensbrueck: as was standard practice in concentration camps, it already had a crematorium.

CHILDREN OF RAVENSBRUECK

Of all the horrors in the camp, the fate of the children was perhaps the worst. Many hundreds were incarcerated with their mothers, and were expected to work alongside the adults. Those too young to work were killed. Pregnant women were forcibly aborted, or allowed to have their babies which were then killed in front of their eyes.

In 1945 the SS evacuated the camp, forcing 20,000 women on a death march ahead of the advancing Red Army. The camp was liberated on 30 April. The Soviets found just 3,000 women, mostly ill, and around 300 men.

In six years, around 130,000 women had passed through the Ravensbrueck system. As many as 92,000 of them died.

Medical experiments

Nazi doctors conducted inhumane medical experiments using psychiatric patients, concentration camp inmates and prisoners of war. More than 70 series of experiments were carried out, with individual camps tending to specialise though some, like Dachau, covered a variety of subjects.

Apart from specialist experiments like those into aviation medicine at Dachau, most research concerned medical treatment. This broke down into three main areas; treatment of battlefield injuries, treatment of poison gas attacks, and immunisation against infectious or contagious diseases. In themselves, these are normal areas of inquiry. But where the Nazi doctors differed from most of their profession was in the use of human guinea pigs to test their theories.

WOUND TREATMENTS

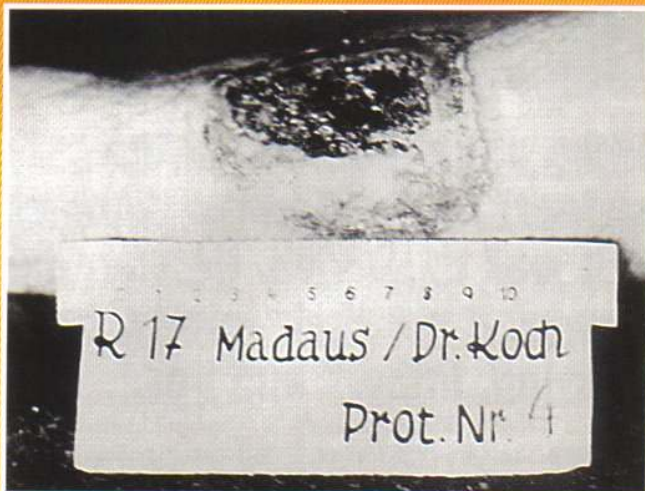
Ravensbrueck's doctors were especially active in experimenting on war wounds. Starting in 1942, Professor Karl Gebhardt – former personal physician to RSHA chief Reinhard Heydrich – conducted a series of experiments on healing and the effects of the new 'wonder drug' sulfonamide. To carry out his tests Gebhardt had to create the wounds in his victims, often inducing gangrene or other infections to make them more realistic. Gebhardt also experimented in transplants, removing bones and nerves from one patient to graft them into another. Eleven out of 24 mentally-ill subjects died; the rest were maimed for life.

Another infamous experimenter was Doctor Carl Clauberg whose speciality was sterilisation. His technique was to inject a variety of substances into the wombs of thousands of women and to record the results. By 1944 he was able to tell Himmler that one doctor and ten assistants could sterilise up to 1,000 Jewish women per day.



Above: Two women and a child wait for sterilisation at Ravensbrueck. Thousands were treated and many died from being injected with poisonous chemicals.

Right: Early stages in an experiment to treat incendiary burns. A mixture of phosphorous and rubber was spread on the victim's bare skin and ignited. It was doused with water after 20 seconds, then wiped with disinfectant. Three days later the wound was treated with Echinicin, an experimental medicine. In this instance, the wound had healed after two weeks, though it left a massive scar.



Left: Carl Clauberg did not repent of his actions, even when imprisoned by the Russians in 1946. Released after seven years, he died before coming to trial in West Germany.

Right: After the war the survivors of medical experiments were the principal witnesses against the Nazi doctors. This Polish woman shows the permanent scar left by a simulated shrapnel wound.





Hitler's Willing Workers



Hitler's regime needed the support of the German workers if it was to survive. He won their labour, if not their loyalty, by bullying, bribery and lies.

EARLY IN 1933 Doctor Robert Ley, the alcoholic Cologne party boss, proclaimed: "Workers! Your institutions are sacred to the National Socialists. I myself am a poor peasant's son and understand poverty... I know the exploitation of capitalism. Workers, I swear to you, we will build up the protection and the rights of the workers still further".

But on May Day 1933, Nazi promises were shown for what they were worth. As millions of ordinary workers were dragooned into stadia for a regimented celebration of the unity of the working class, Stormtroopers smashed their way into union offices all over Germany. They seized assets and dragged union leaders off to concentration camps. Only the Nazi Party would be allowed to organise labour under the Reich.

Hitler presented Nazi Germany as a Volksgemeinschaftlicher Arbeiterstaat or 'communal workers state'. The principal means of achieving this aim was the drive towards full employment. The Nazis also sought to win the hearts and minds of workers via 'Strength through Joy'.

In 1933, Hitler and his young Nazi government began to consolidate their power base. The Social Democratic Party was the largest of Hitler's political opponents, and its election base was built on the support of the blue-collar workers. Hitler would need the allegiance of this deeply conservative body to retain his mandate to rule.

The immediate aim was to depoliticise the working class and then to bind it to the New Order. By outlawing the unions, Hitler sought to destroy the power of traditional socialism, at the same time securing the continued support of rich industrialists.

Germany endured particular hardship in the worldwide

depression of the early 1930s. Job security was non-existent. Since 1930 six million workers had become unemployed and the wages of those fortunate enough to retain a job had been cut by a third. The situation was such that any party which promised full employment was going to enjoy huge popular support, no matter how this was to be achieved.

Exploiting labour

The history of the Third Reich and the labour movement was one of a cynical utilisation of the work force to prepare Germany for war, whilst duping the working class with a government sponsored program of temporary but attractive palliatives.



"Reich Drunk Master"

An early member of the NSDAP, the alcoholic chemist Robert Ley was tasked by Hitler to direct Nazi efforts to control the labour force. After the elimination of the unions on 2 May 1933, Ley established the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*. Far from being an advocate of the working classes, however, the DAF was rather a gigantic propaganda organ, whose aim was to divert the attention of the masses through a series of recreational and leisure time activities.

The emotionally unstable Ley found his own joy by looting union treasuries, confiscating workers pension funds and increasing hours of work whilst decreasing wages. Ley sought to strengthen the Party by founding the Adolf Hitler Schools for the

selection of the party's future leadership.

Ley reached the high-point of his influence as a member of the German Economic Council when the economy was switched to war production and he co-ordinated efforts to channel the massive DAF membership dues into building army vehicles and ships. But his career became increasingly over-shadowed by Albert Speer and Fritz Todt.

Ley tried to maintain his position by particularly brutal Jew-baiting. He paid the price and was indicted at Nuremberg, where he repented of his anti-semitism in a political testament. On 25 October 1945, Ley made a noose of rags from a towel and hanged himself from a toilet pipe in his cell.

Below: A poster advertising 'Strength through Joy' cruises. Ley's creation, designed to bribe the ordinary working German, oversaw the introduction of the world's first mass-market package tours.



Ley (centre) with Inspector of Concentration Camps Theodor Eicke at Dachau in 1936. Dismissed by IG Farben for drunkenness, Ley's alcoholism had little effect on his rise through the pre-war Nazi hierarchy.

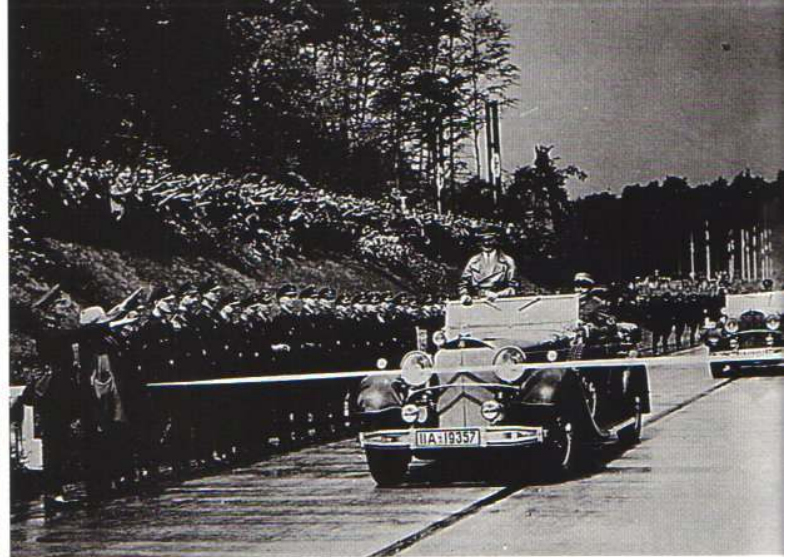
In place of the unions, Hitler created the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF). Industrial relations were legislated for by the 'Law for the Ordering of National Labour'. In this neo-feudal system free collective bargaining was replaced by 'plant community', a utopian concept where managers and workers laboured for the common good on the basis of mutually accepted ties and obligations. Mutual trust and confidence would replace industrial strife.

'Trustees of Labour' were appointed to arbitrate between managers and employees. They 'regulated labour contracts' and 'maintained labour peace'. The decisions of the trustees were binding – strikes were now illegal.

Disputes, if they arose, were to be resolved by Councils of Trust and Labour Courts of Honour. But these tribunals were staffed by pliant Nazis willing to do the bidding of the employer. Ley promised "to restore the natural leader of a factory. For the first time in years employers are once again to be masters in their own houses."

Workers accepted the loss of hard-won privileges, largely gained during the Weimar years. They were bribed by increased employment through a massive scheme of public works, supported by a whole raft of productivity incentive schemes.

The Finance Ministry allocated over a billion Reichsmarks for projects, the most famous of which being the construction of a network of *Autobahnen*. Between 1933 and 1938 Dr Fritz Todt, the



Above left and Above: The thing which would bring the German worker into the Nazi fold was job creation. The huge re-armament drive and a massive program of public works – such as the building of autobahnen – brought an end to the dole queues and won the loyalty of the people.

Below: Trying to recruit employers into the DAP was more difficult. In spite of intensive party propaganda which peddled the notion of a 'Volk Community a Workers State', German bosses simply disliked any forms of organised labour. Even so, most co-operated fully with the party.



stoppage at the Opel works in Russelheim in 1937 led to the immediate arrest of the seven 'ringleaders' and the blacklisting of another 36. Strikes nevertheless continued to occur, even in war time. There were walk-outs by Ruhr miners, Hamburg stevedores and the Dortmund port workers. These were key industries, and official reaction to such industrial actions had to be tempered by the ever growing labour shortages in the Reich.

Industrial concord

Even so, labour discipline in the Third Reich was remarkably high; so high, in fact, that between 1941 and 1944 the output of armaments rose by 230%. This allowed Albert Speer, the highly efficient armaments minister, to claim that German Industry had

helped to stave off Germany's defeat by two years.

But why did the German worker so passively accept his lot? The Party line was that workers were given a sense of pride and self-worth by their place in the New Order: like ants, they worked for the good of their nation. However, a sense of pride did little to counteract the subsistence wages that most lived on during the Reich. Possibly the Nazis made use of the innate German feeling for order, and for obeying orders.

But the most probable reason that ordinary Germans followed Hitler into Hell was simple loyalty: the Nazis had given them jobs and security. Under the Weimar government the rights of the free man had in large part been the freedom to starve.

General Inspector for Reich Highways, oversaw the completion of three thousand kilometres of these multi-lane highways. The Propaganda Ministry made much of the project, depicting thousands of dedicated workers building the 'Führer's roads'. Goebbels and his spin doctors presented a false image of an homogenous *Volk* community, where class and privilege were subordinated to the good of the whole.

Out with class

The classless society was to be enforced from above. Inequality in the workplace was to be outlawed. Out went patriarchal dominance; blue-collar workers were no longer to feel excluded by accidents of birth, they were to be addressed as *du* only if their white-collar brethren were similarly labelled; 'clocking-in' was to be replaced by reveille (an industrial variation on morning assembly in school); plant managers were to institute beer and sausage evenings and most laughably, there were the 'plant family schemes' – industrial troilism where plant managers plus one each of blue- and white-collar workers were to share breaks at Labour Front holiday homes.

Other innovations were the 'self-inspectors' and the 'self-calculators'. The first were the titles given to loyal workers who through their industry were allowed to supervise themselves, and so save the employers from providing the additional personnel. The second were very fast workers who were allowed to set their own piece rates. This

was at the cost of other employees as managers soon adjusted overall piece rates to the productivity of the 'self-calculators'. Less than lip service was paid to these proclamations.

The bogus Nazi vision for their new industrial society was one of reconstructed feudalism. As with the serfs in medieval Europe, the workers became ever more bound to their place of work. Various government proclamations seriously restricted a worker's ability to move from one job to another. After June 1935, the state employment offices had a monopoly on who could be hired for what.

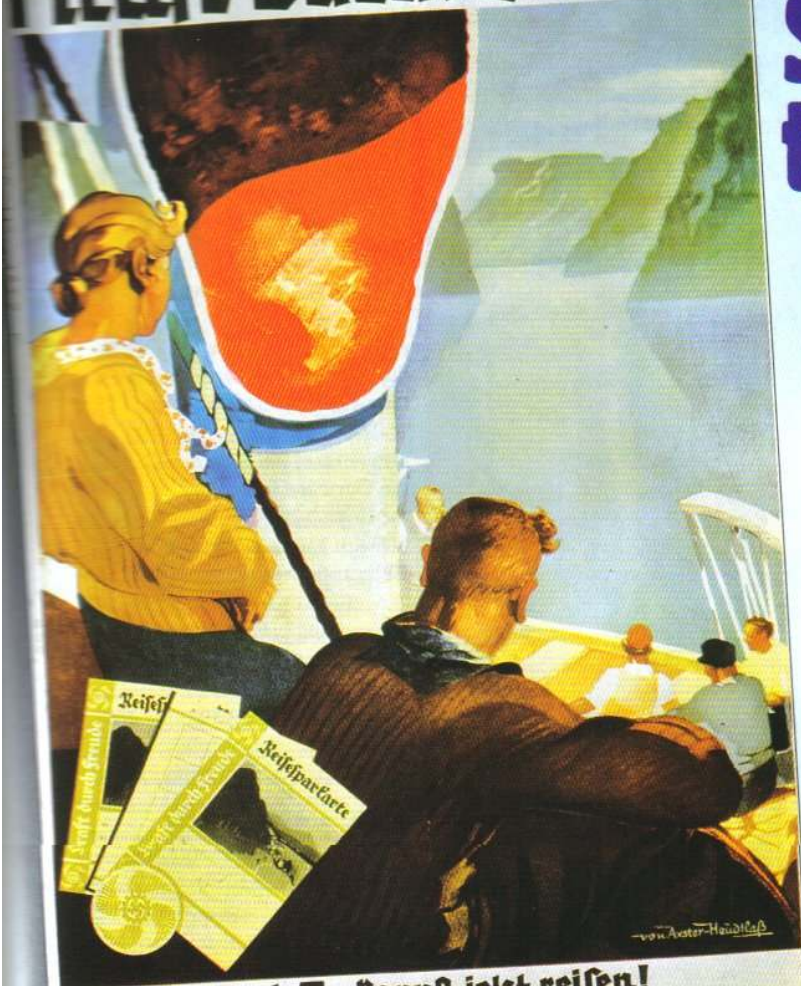
A work book was introduced in February 1935 which contained details of a workers employment history and qualifications. Without this, no-one could be gainfully employed. From the summer of the same year all German males between 18 and 25 were subject to six months of compulsory labour service. This was reinforced on 22 June 1938 when the Office of the Four Year Plan obliged every German to work where the state sent them.

Labour punishment

The punishment for non-compliance could be severe. Anybody who absented themselves from employment without good reason was liable to fines or imprisonment. Workers faced three months in jail or in a labour camp for poor time keeping, a year for refusing overtime and two years for the second instance of truancy.

Strikes were initially repressed mercilessly. A 17-minute

Kraft durch Freude



Auch Du kannst jetzt reisen!

Belagte: Die noch heute eine Reisekarte der NSD Kraft durch Freude. Der RGS-Wort Deines Betriebes und folgende Stellen geben sie kostenlos aus: Wort des Deutschen Arbeit, alle öffentlichen Sportstätten, Berufsvereinigungen (NSD und Reichsvereine), Thüringische Staatsbahn

Above: For the German worker the rewards of labour were very real. By 1938 the 'Travel Hiking and Vacation Office' had arranged trips for about 10 million workers, especially to areas barely open to tourists such as the Bavarian forests or the Masurian lakes in East Prussia.

Kraft durch Freude - 'Strength through Joy' - was the recreational organisation instituted by the DAF. Leisure as well as industry was to be programmed; a worker's evenings and weekends were to be filled with evening classes, amateur cultural activities, recitals, travelling art exhibitions and theatre as well as honing the body through a massive sports and gymnastics effort.

Most famously, the KdF offered inexpensive holiday excursions and foreign cruises. KdF holiday makers cruised on luxury liners and travelled by train to the Alps, Venice, Naples and Lisbon. And they liked it. By 1938, one worker in every 200 took a sea cruise, and one in three took part in some kind of KdF activity. Within two years of its establishment, two single-class ocean liners were built especially for the tours.

In the end though, the workers paid for their diversions. The

annual income from dues to the Labour Front in 1937 was \$160,000,000. From these 10% was put towards KdF. The fees paid by individuals for their trips before the war totalled \$1,250,000,000.

One of the biggest sources of funds was the *Volkswagen*, or people's car, known originally as the *KdF Wagen*. Before this the automobile had been viewed as a bourgeois status symbol, but now the average worker could pay weekly installments in order to purchase one. The advertising slogan ran "5 Mark die Woche du sparen, willst du im eigenen Wagen fahren!".

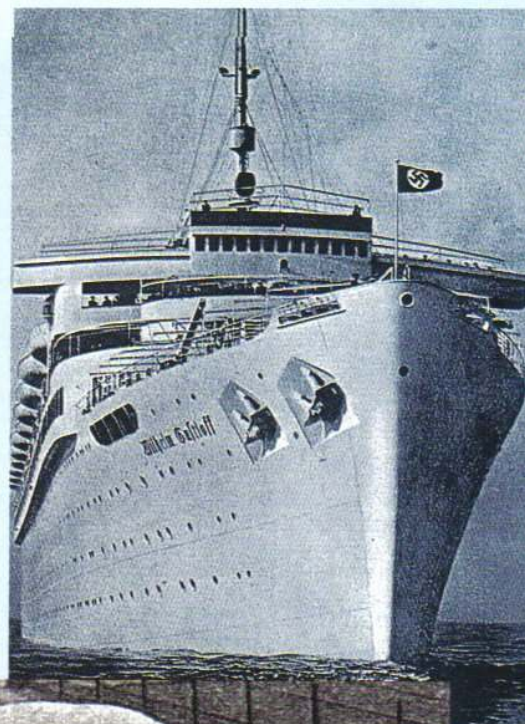
Although as many as 360,000 people placed orders for the car and made down-payments, none of the people's cars were actually delivered due to the factory responsible being turned over to the production of the military version, the *Kübelwagen*.

Strength through Joy



Above: One of the hundreds of thousands of Volkswagen savings books held by German workers who were to be swindled out of their 'Beetles'.

Right: The Wilhelm Gustloff was one of the first purpose-designed cruise ships. Its foreign tours in the 1930s were 'show the flag' missions for National Socialism. During the war these steamships were put into service as troop transports. The Gustloff was sunk by a Soviet submarine while evacuating the Baltic States in 1945: over 7,000 refugees died.



Below: "Make it look like a beetle" said the Führer, and Dr Ferdinand Porsche duly came up with the goods. Although no worker received a VW before 1939, after the war it became a great success story. By 1981 production of the car worldwide reached 20 million vehicles.





Warsaw Rising: Hell on Earth

In 1944 Hitler ordered the annihilation of the Polish resistance in Warsaw. The Red Army looked on, refusing to intervene.

ON 22 JUNE 1944, three years to the day since Hitler's attack on the USSR, the Soviet army launched a massive offensive against the German Army Group Centre. Denuded of armour and airpower to shore up other sectors, the Army Group disintegrated, with the first large-scale surrenders by German units on the eastern front: 150,000 men threw down their arms in a month. In five weeks, the Germans lost 300,000 men; the Soviet army advanced up to 600 km across a 1000 km front. Belorussia was liberated and Soviet forces raced across Poland, discovering grisly scenes at Majdenek on 23 July where the SS had not had time to destroy the concentration camp, its gas chambers or the warehouses containing 850,000 pairs of shoes.

SOVIET APPROACH

By the end of the month the Soviet spearheads were approaching Warsaw, the Polish capital. The hub of rail and road communications in Poland, it was a vital crossing point over the river Vistula. German reinforcements poured in to defend it. The elite *Hermann Göring* Panzer Division counter-attacked alongside the 4th Panzer Division and the veteran SS men of the *Wiking* Division. Two Soviet tank corps were driven back in a fierce tank battle just 15 km north-east of Warsaw.

By this point, the Soviet armies had fought their way across 700 km of enemy-held territory and out-run their supply lines. The Soviet 1st Belorussian Front lost 123,000 men during its great offensive through Belorussia and across Poland, enough for its half-Polish commander to reject the idea that he could have bounced the Germans out of Warsaw.

The Polish resistance had no direct contact with Moscow, and no way of knowing just how exhausted the seemingly-invincible Soviet armies were. On 29 July Moscow radio declared that "the hour for

action has arrived."

On 1 August 1944, just as the German counterattack got into its stride, the Polish *Armia Krajowa* (AK, or Home Army) attempted to seize Warsaw from the Nazi occupation forces. Although its leader, General Tadeusz 'Bor' Komorowski, had about 40,000 men and women under his command, only one person in ten had a firearm. The rest made do with improvised weapons, from tyre irons to petrol bombs.

TAKEN BY SURPRISE

The Warsaw Rising took the German garrison by surprise. Many offices and administrative centres had already been evacuated west, and the few troops in the city were overwhelmed, their weapons seized. Several Panther tanks and Hetzer tank destroyers were captured, but the AK remained critically short of guns and ammunition.

In the first heady hours, all seemed to go well. The Old Town and city centre were liberated, and the Germans were driven out of many city districts. But the Germans rallied and drove the AK out of the east bank suburb of Praga. None of the Vistula

bridges remained in Polish hands. An AK attempt to overrun the airport at Okęcie was repulsed by German army and Luftwaffe ground troops.

While the German garrison struggled to contain the rising, reinforcements were rushed to Warsaw. The German armoured forces continued to drive the Soviets back from the city while other, more sinister elements were assembled to crush the rising. It would soon be alleged that the Soviet regime was playing a double game: holding back while two sets of enemies tore themselves apart in Warsaw. However, the Soviet 3rd Tank Corps and 8th Guards Tank Corps fought tooth and nail to stop the German counter-attack. And the evidence suggests that Stalin anticipated his forces would seize the city in the first week of August, a triumphant conclusion to their lightning campaign that summer.

HITLER'S HATRED

Hitler regarded the Poles with particular contempt, seeing them as nothing more than a source of slave labour for the German 'master race'. His deeply racist view was shared equally by a



Above: A German infantryman watches from the rubble of a building in the Old Town as a Hetzer tank destroyer enters the street. The Poles only had enough small arms for about a quarter of their initial strength, and they had even less ability to counter heavy armoured vehicles.

POLAND'S HOME ARMY

After the fall of Poland on 5 October 1939, Polish resistance at home centred upon the Polish Secret Underground State which reported to the government in exile in London.

The underground State's military wing was the Polish Home Army (AK) which at its peak had about 400,000 soldiers. The main task of the AK was sabotage and partisan activity, and it tied up several badly needed German divisions throughout the occupation. The AK succeeded in destroying vast amounts of railway traffic and infrastructure as well as disposing of 6,000 troops and officials, most notably the notorious SS General Kuttschera, police chief of the Warsaw district.

The AK launched a series of regional uprisings or 'Burze' in the early part of 1944, the first was in Volhynia, then Wilno and Nowogrodek, and most successfully around Lublin. On each occasion, the Soviets accepted

cooperation, but then the NKVD killing units moved in. AK members were arrested, deported, shot or forcibly incorporated into the Moscow-controlled LWP (Polish People's Army). Such brutality was anticipated, as it was commonly known that the 15,000 Polish military officers captured by the Russians in 1939 had been assassinated in the Katyn forest. Warsaw was the government in exile's last chance: to liberate the capital before the Soviets arrived and confront Moscow with a fait accompli.

The gambit in Warsaw failed as it was insufficiently supported by Stalin. The AK, broken by the Germans and Soviets in turn, was dissolved by General Okulicki, Bor-Komorowski's successor, on 19 January 1945.

Right: After two months of butchery, the AK surrendered. Half of its 30,000 men and women were dead, and many of the survivors would perish in the concentration camps.





Above: The German assault on Warsaw combined the latest military technology with medieval barbarism. Goliath was a remote-controlled mini-tank, a tracked bomb designed for fighting in built-up areas. Packed with 90 kg of explosive, it was used to blow up AK strongpoints.

high proportion of the German High Command and the young soldiers who had grown up under a flood of Nazi propaganda during the 1930s.

Less than a fortnight before he learned of the Warsaw Rising, Hitler had survived the bomb plot and attempted coup d'état of 20 July. Paranoid, vindictive and yet more convinced than ever of his 'divine destiny', Hitler ordered the Poles to be annihilated and Warsaw razed to the ground.

To carry out this biblical war of extermination, he dispatched *SS-Gruppenführer* Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the utterly ruthless co-ordinator of anti-partisan operations on the Russian Front. The SS general brought with him two of the most infamous military units created by the Third Reich. Commanded by Bronislaw Kaminski and *SS-Oberführer* Oskar Dirlewanger, they wasted no time in showing their true colours.

Kaminski was a former Red Army officer who had changed sides. He had commanded a

counter-guerrilla force against Soviet partisans south of Bryansk, his renegade army expanding to five infantry regiments supported by 20 captured T-34 tanks.

Together with their families and hangers-on, his 'Russian National Liberation Army' included up to 50,000 souls when it was forced to retreat west with its German masters in late 1943. In May 1944 Kaminski was appointed *SS-Oberführer* and his private army was transferred into the *Waffen SS* as 'assault brigade RONA'. Filled out with Soviet POWs and 'trustees' from the concentration camps, it arrived in Warsaw as 29 *Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS (russische Nr.1)* and got to work.

HATRED OF THE POLES

Kaminski's followers shared the Germans' pathological hatred of the Poles – the Russian Civil War and subsequent Russo-Polish War of the 1920s had been marked by repeated atrocities. On 5 August the Kaminski division stormed the Wola district of Warsaw, taking no prisoners. The first-aid

Red Army and the Rising

The Soviet dictator Stalin watched as German troops annihilated the anti-Communist AK. Stalin was to install his own puppet government in Warsaw once the Nazis retreated.



The reasons for the Soviet halt in front of Warsaw in August 1944 continue to generate furious debate. It was either due to exhaustion, tough German defences or a cynical manipulation of the situation by Stalin. It was probably a combination of all three.

Clearly Russian supply lines were stretched after their great victories of the summer against Army Group Centre. This was highlighted by the initial success of Field Marshal Model's four-armoured division counter-attack on Rokossovsky's First Belorussian front. The attack had been blunted, however, by 8 August, only a week into the rising. Local Soviet military superiority was overwhelming and a determined push on Warsaw at this time may have succeeded.

In the rising, Stalin the arch manipulator, recognised the gift presented to him. If the German and Polish forces annihilated each other, he would be able to move in and establish a Communist regime without the

impediment of a strongly organised nationalist government. This explanation would account for Russian media on 9 August condemning the rising as a 'political racket', and Stalin denouncing the leaders of the AK as 'criminal adventurers', guilty of irresponsibility for launching the uprising. Furthermore, in the initial stages – at least until German victory was assured – Stalin denied Allied airforces use of his airfields for the dropping of supplies to the pressurised resistance.

The sole attempt from the Soviets to give direct military assistance to the AK was the landing of a battalion of infantry from one of the Red Army's Polish units on the west bank, but this had to retreat after heavy losses.

Ultimately Stalin was unconcerned by the fate of the AK. His armies over-ran Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary before Warsaw was finally taken in January 1945. It would be another 40 years before the Communists were ready to give up their gains resulting from the AK's sacrifice.



posts they overran saw scenes of characteristic cruelty: the wounded and their nurses were doused in petrol and set alight. Captured women and children were tied to their vehicles before they assaulted the next sector. In 24 hours of indescribable horror, some 10,000 Polish men, women and children were slaughtered by Kaminski's troops.

Similar acts of grotesque barbarity were taking place elsewhere in the city by the 36 *Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS* commanded by the convicted paedophile and all-round psychopath Oskar Dirlewanger.

URBAN WARFARE

The fighting continued for the whole of August. Building by building, block by block, the Germans battled their way into the city. Combat engineer battalions were flown in. Polish strongpoints were attacked with 'Goliaths', remote-controlled demolition vehicles. The Germans soon realised that the Poles had few anti-tank weapons:

the bazooka was but a recent invention, and the AK did not have any. The Poles were forced to rely on 'Molotov cocktails' (petrol bombs), explosive charges and home-made flame-throwers.

The Polish perimeter contracted daily, and desperate pleas for help went unanswered. The British and Americans wanted to drop supplies to the AK, but their aircraft could not carry much of a load on the 2240 km (1,400 mile) round-trip from the nearest bases in Italy. Attempts were made, but prohibitive losses were suffered by the bombers as they made predictable approaches to the city. German fighters and a fierce concentration of flak stopped even the Polish volunteer crews of Bomber Command, who suffered horrendous casualties before admitting defeat. The only

Right: The Germans used everything in their power to crush the rising, including this massive 60 cm mortar. Its shells would travel completely through the roof and all floors of a building and lodge deep in the foundations before exploding.



The SS Commanders

DR OSKAR DIRLEWANGER (1895-1945)

Even in the SS, an organisation with more than its share of monsters, Oskar Dirlewanger stood out. A political science graduate and convicted child molester, Dirlewanger was a former Army officer and SA leader who joined the *Waffen SS* in 1939.

He was tasked with forming a special sharpshooter detachment of convicted poachers whose country skills could be put to good



use. But 'honest' poachers were few and far between, and the unit's main strength was as ugly a collection of thieves and murderers as could be trawled from the Reich's cesspools.

Early in 1941 *SS Sonderbattalion Dirlewanger* was posted to the Lublin district under Odilo Globocnik. In 1942 he was given an anti-partisan assignment. Dirlewanger now found his true vocation; outdoing other Nazis in the wholesale brutalisation and extermination of the civilian populations. Even the SS were revolted by his excesses and he was investigated by an SS court, though he was not indicted.

In August 1944 *Standartenführer* Dirlewanger together with Kaminski's brigade of defected Soviet troops was posted to Warsaw to quell the uprising. Their atrocities are now infamous, and Soviet Marshal Zhukov placed a large bounty on Dirlewanger's head. But fleeing westwards at the end of the war he escaped the wrath of the Russians – unlike his brigade members. He died, apparently of mistreatment, in a French prison.

ERICH VON DEM BACH-ZELEWSKI (1899-1972)

A notorious SS commander of Prussian aristocratic stock, Bach-Zelewski was the German army's youngest volunteer in November 1914. He joined the SS in 1931, which he later cynically claimed was for his own protection – his two sisters had married Jews.

Promoted *SS-Gruppenführer* in 1941, he personally participated in annihilating Jews in Riga and Minsk. "There are no more Jews in Estonia" he boasted in October 1941. As Higher SS and Police Leader for Army Group Centre's operational area, he reported personally to Himmler on all anti-partisan operations – which included liquidating Jews. It was in this capacity that he was given responsibility for crushing the Warsaw Uprising, for which he was awarded the Knight's Cross.

Bach-Zelewski had ultimate responsibility for the excesses of Dirlewanger and Kaminski, and when Hitler ordered their



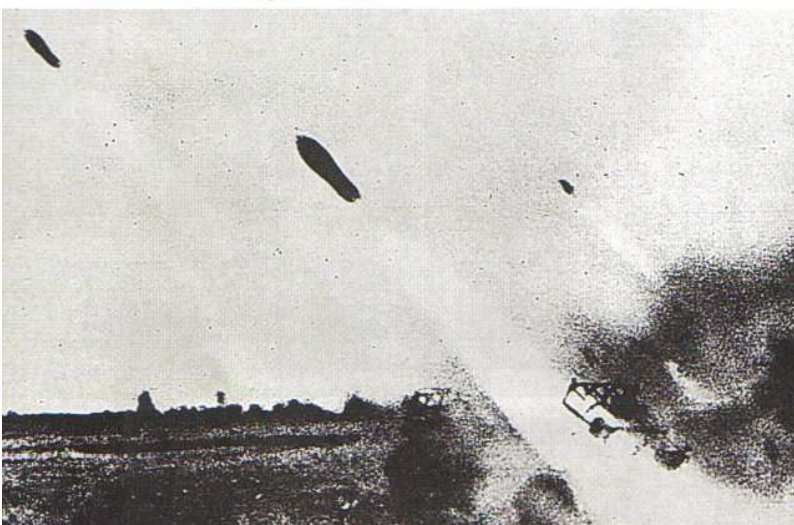
withdrawal, he had Kaminski executed – thus disposing of a possibly dangerous witness. On the Führer's orders Bach-Zelewski then levelled Warsaw.

At the end of the battle, he treated the AK fighters as POWs rather than partisans. He knew Germany's defeat was inevitable and wished to avoid indictment for war crimes. And it worked: by appearing as a prosecution witness at Nuremberg, Bach-Zelewski escaped hanging for his genocidal crimes.



Above: Anybody who was fit enough to fire a rifle or throw a Molotov cocktail was welcome in the Polish Home Army. Even though casualty rates were appallingly high, men, women and children took part in the fight.

Below: With no need to be careful about the structure of the city – after all, Hitler had ordered it destroyed – the Germans could use every weapon in their arsenal. This included devastating high-explosive rockets fired in huge numbers.



Below: With metal plates mounted on their sides to protect them against infantry anti-tank rockets, two Sturmgeschütz assault guns lead an attack on a Polish stronghold. Against such odds it is remarkable that the Poles held out so long.



Above: Astonishingly, considering their woeful lack of weaponry and ammunition, the AK held out against powerful German forces for two months. Some 15,000 survived to become PoWs – which was a better fate than the survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto rising of the year before. Those fighters had been Jews – and their destiny was the gas chamber.

solution was to use Soviet airfields in Poland, but Stalin refused them permission until mid-September.

The Poles took to using the sewers to communicate between the liberated areas. The tunnel messengers – mainly boys and young women – wore goggles to protect their eyes from the toxic fumes. As the battle ground on, and the Germans isolated several sectors, the sewers became the AK's only link. First the wounded were taken below to be followed by the fighters as the underground became exactly that. It was along the sewers that about 2,500 fighters withdrew as they reluctantly abandoned the Old Town and retreated to the city centre. Men and women too badly injured to escape via the tunnels were left behind. The Germans burned them alive.

FAILED RE-SUPPLY

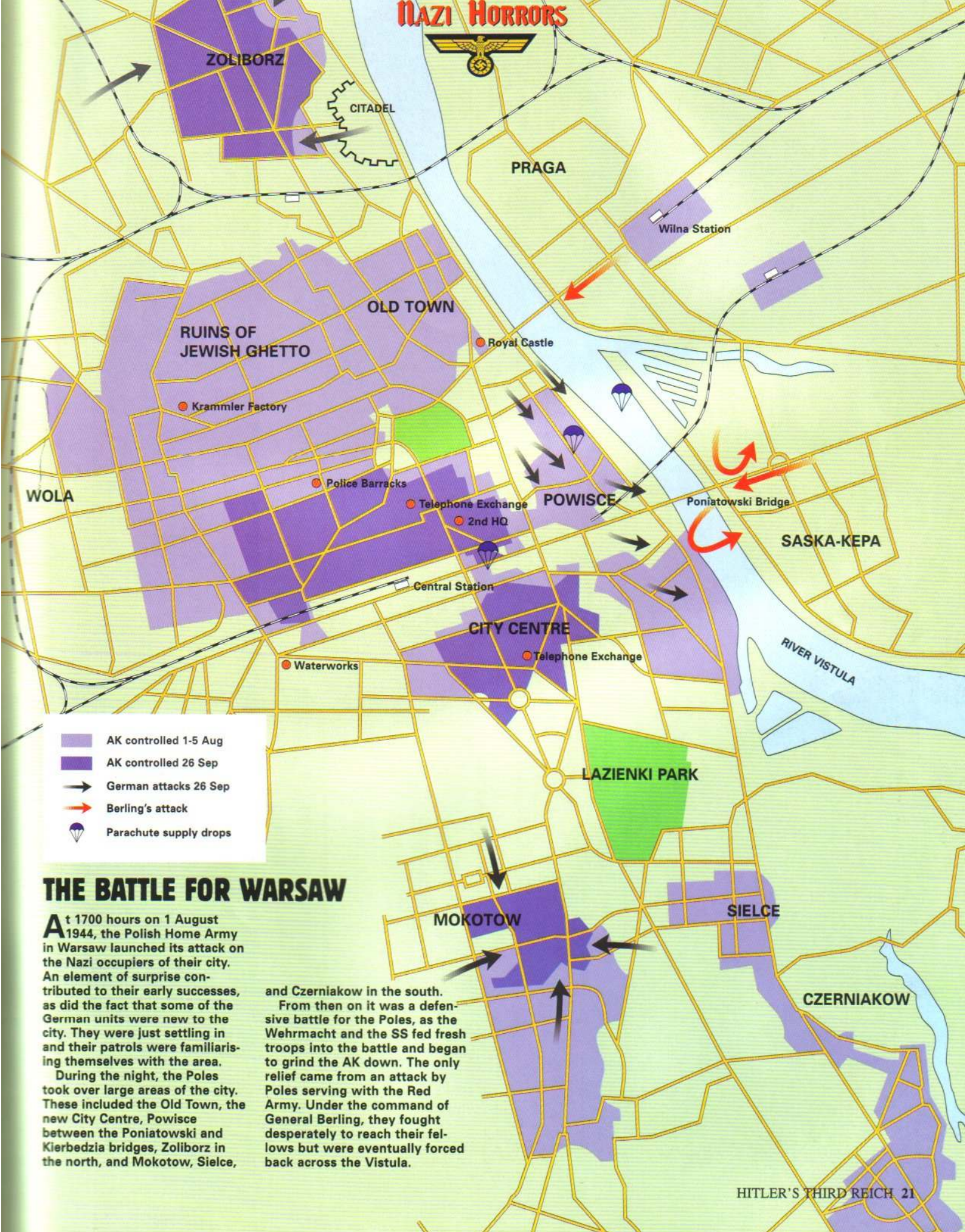
By the time the USAAF was able to mount its first shuttle flight to Warsaw, most of the city had been re-captured by the Germans. The surviving fighters of the AK watched helplessly as container after container sailed gently down to land behind enemy lines. But on 10 September, the regrouped Soviet forces attacked Praga, the 1st Polish Army in the vanguard. Soviet supply drops began, delivering 500 anti-tank rifles and several thousand small arms to the AK; the forward deployment of Red Army anti-aircraft units and several fighter regiments discouraging any opposition from the Luftwaffe.

A desperate race began to link up with the insurgents before they were wiped out. The Germans reacted with typical speed: the 25th Panzer Division was brought in to crush resistance in the suburb of Żoliborz.

The Red Army's 1st Polish Army tried to force its way across the Vistula in a series of small boat night assaults. Small bridgeheads were established, but wiped out by German counter-attacks; the Poles kept fighting even after their Soviet superiors called the operation off. By 22 September the Soviet Front commander accepted that he could not break into Warsaw. The AK was doomed.

The western Allies' final intervention saved some lives. Britain and America insisted that the AK fighters be treated as proper combatants, not as partisans. If the survivors were not accorded full prisoner-of-war status, German POWs held by the Allies would face reprisals. So when the city surrendered on 2 October, it was not the signal for the wholesale massacre that would have probably occurred otherwise.

About 200,000 of Warsaw's one million citizens died in the rising. The AK suffered about 15,000 casualties – 40 per cent of its strength on 1 August. The Poles did not take many prisoners either – the Germans admitted to 10,000 dead, 9,000 wounded and another 7,000 missing; the blackened ruins of the city were not liberated until January 1945.



- AK controlled 1-5 Aug
- AK controlled 26 Sep
- German attacks 26 Sep
- Berling's attack
- Parachute supply drops

THE BATTLE FOR WARSAW

At 1700 hours on 1 August 1944, the Polish Home Army in Warsaw launched its attack on the Nazi occupiers of their city. An element of surprise contributed to their early successes, as did the fact that some of the German units were new to the city. They were just settling in and their patrols were familiarising themselves with the area.

During the night, the Poles took over large areas of the city. These included the Old Town, the new City Centre, Powisze between the Poniatoski and Kierbedzia bridges, Zoliborz in the north, and Mokotow, Sielce,

and Czerniakow in the south.

From then on it was a defensive battle for the Poles, as the Wehrmacht and the SS fed fresh troops into the battle and began to grind the AK down. The only relief came from an attack by Poles serving with the Red Army. Under the command of General Berling, they fought desperately to reach their fellows but were eventually forced back across the Vistula.



HITLER'S HENCHMEN



Joachim Von Ribbentrop

"CHAMPAGNE PEDLAR"

After considerable success at the London naval conference in 1935, Hitler picked Ribbentrop as ambassador to London from 1936. Hitler was still eager to win the British over to a policy of non-intervention in Europe, particularly on the anti-Bolshevik front and was convinced that in Ribbentrop he had picked the "best horse in the stable". The Reich's Foreign Minister was to shock and outrage British and German diplomats alike with his arrogant disregard for protocol.

Joachim von Ribbentrop was a smooth-talking *bon viveur*. But though he was a skilful social climber, he was to prove useless as Hitler's Foreign minister.

GOEBBELS summed him up famously. "Von Ribbentrop bought his name, he married his money, and he swindled his way into office." Between 1938 and 1945, Ribbentrop strutted the world stage as Reichs Minister for foreign affairs – one of the unlikeliest holders of political office since Caligula appointed his horse, Incitatus, to the Roman senate. Deeply implicated in the Nazi regime's plans to wage aggressive war, in rounding up Jews for the extermination camps, and in orders to execute shot-down Allied air crew, he was sentenced to death at Nuremberg. And since Goering cheated the hangman by swallowing cyanide, it fell to von Ribbentrop to lead the last procession of Nazi leaders as they marched into the execution chamber at 1 am in the morning of 16 October 1946.

SELLING HIMSELF

The outbreak of the First World War found the 21-year-old Ribbentrop working as a sales representative in Canada. His wartime career is not easy to



untangle from the web of lies he was to spin in later years. He escaped to Germany, that much is certain. Serving in the Torgau Hussars, he was commissioned and awarded the Iron Cross first class before he was invalided out in 1917. By the mid-1930s, stories were circulating that he had actually been a spy in Canada, and had returned to the USA in 1915 to sabotage factories producing war materials for the Allies. Given his record as a diplomat, it is difficult to conceive of anyone less likely to have made a successful spy.

Ribbentrop returned to salesmanship, at which he excelled. In 1919 he set himself up as a wine merchant, procuring expensive French wines and brandies for some wealthy Berlin acquaintances. That autumn he took part in a tennis tournament and met the 24-year-old daughter of Otto Henkell, whose company was the leading producer of Sekt, the German sparkling wine. Anna Elisabeth (Annelies) was an iron-willed young woman, not beautiful, but known for her force of character. It was certainly a love match. The prison psychiatrist at Nuremberg said Annelies represented the mother substitute he craved (his mother died of TB when he was eight). But this is the standard judgement of the profession: all that can be confidently said of Ribbentrop is that, unlike most of the Nazi hierarchy, he remained faithful to his wife – and to Hitler – until the end.

BUYING A NAME

Having married his money, Ribbentrop did indeed buy his title. In May 1925 he got himself adopted by his impoverished 62-year-old 'aunt' Gertrud. She was a spinster, daughter of Generalleutnant Karl von Ribbentrop – himself only ennobled in 1884 – and a friend of the family. She was no aunt: to find a common ancestor meant tracing the family tree back several centuries.

Exploiting a 1919 law actually passed to deny official recognition to noble titles in Germany, Ribbentrop was able to adopt her name. And he contracted to pay her 450 RM per month for 15 years. (She later had to sue him for the money, a fact uncovered by a gleeful Goering in the mid-1930s and loudly shared with the other Nazi leaders.)

BECOMING A NAZI

The Ribbentrops joined the Nazi Party in 1932. They played a key role that year, hosting the clandestine meetings between Hitler and von Papen that led to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. Ribbentrop was an early associate of Heinrich Himmler who appointed him a *Standartenführer* in the fledgling SS. Ribbentrop was relieved to find himself on the winning side after 'the Night of the Long Knives', since he was also an associate of Ernst Röhm. He took to wearing his SS uniform at every possible opportunity.

Hitler's regime was characterised by competing bureaucracies, intended more to prevent a rival Führer emerging than for efficiency. Ribbentrop was one of the early beneficiaries of Hitler's *divide et impera* style of government. He became a sort of roving ambassador, officially attached to the Foreign Ministry but reporting directly to Hitler who (correctly) regarded the Ministry as a nest of conservative, even monarchist anti-Nazis.

Hitler was ignorant of foreign languages and foreign countries, and the apparently worldly sophisticate Ribbentrop seemed a useful recruit. He had lived in England and Canada, and spoke fluent English and French and a reasonable amount of Russian. He was also completely servile, with few friends among the Nazi hierarchy.

It was in this semi-official capacity that he tried to engineer a meeting between Hitler and the new British prime minister, Stanley Baldwin. Handsome,

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

With the onset of WWII Ribbentrop's position as foreign minister became largely redundant as the time for 'jaw-jaw' was passed. Ribbentrop was relegated largely to the background but he did survive an attempted coup in April 1943 by a foreign office subordinate, Martin Luther.

He was not noted in his early career for anti-Semitism and had many Jewish friends. But he was not alone among the Nazi hierarchy by seeking to bolster his position and curry favour with

his beloved Führer by placing himself and his office wholly at the service of the Final Solution. He personally exerted pressure on occupied and Allied countries to hand over their Jewish citizens to the SS.

In the extensive records of the Nuremberg trials there is not a favourable word to be had about Ribbentrop. He was found guilty on all four counts of war crimes, and following the suicide of Goering, he led the parade to the gallows as the most prominent Nazi to hang.

Below: Von Ribbentrop was the front-man in negotiating the 'Pact of Steel' on 22 May 1939. This formalised the Berlin-Rome Axis which had followed the statement of common interests of 21 October 1936. The contracting parties had contradictory motives. Hitler saw it as part of the political preparation for the Polish campaign, whereas Mussolini sought to commit the Germans to peace at least until 1942.



polished, the consummate salesman, Ribbentrop never had an inkling that he came across as verbose, humourless and utterly deaf to argument.

ANNOYING THE BRITISH

Selling champagne to thirsty war profiteers in Berlin was one thing; selling Hitler to the British quite another. Indeed, his visits during 1933-34 were so counter-productive that the German foreign ministry begged Hitler to remove him. The division between the diplomats proper and the upstart Ribbentrop was publicly exposed in London during the 1934 ceremony of Trooping the Colour. At one end of the

embassy balcony, the ambassador, his officials and their wives bowed and curtsied at the passing royal carriage. At the other end Ribbentrop and his cronies gave the Nazi salute.

Perversely, the professional diplomats' criticism seemed to increase Ribbentrop's standing with Hitler. But foreign minister Freiherr von Neurath suggested that the self-styled expert on England would be the perfect choice to replace the recently deceased German ambassador there. "After three months in London," he confided to a friend, "Ribbentrop will be done for. They can't stand him there."

Goering queried Hitler's decision. Hitler explained that

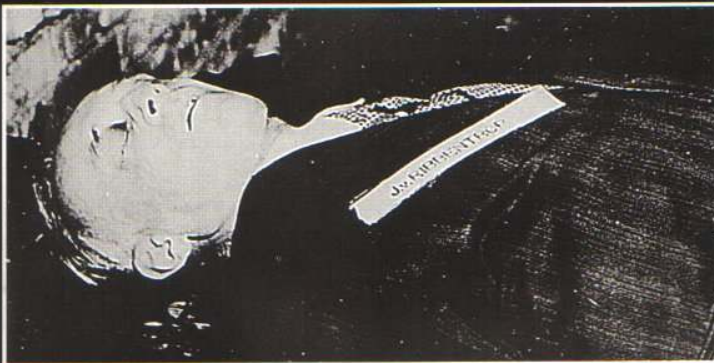
HITLER'S HENCHMEN



Above: The 21-year-old Joachim Ribbentrop rehearses for a theatrical production in Ottawa. He spent the three years before World War I in a variety of jobs which took him all over Canada. Ever the social climber, he used amateur dramatics as an 'in' to local society.



Above: Ribbentrop married wealthy heiress Annelies Henkel in 1920. In spite of her parents' disapproval, the social-climbing Ribbentrop used their contacts to gain an entrée into German high society. The couple had four children.



Left: The party's over. Ribbentrop is finally shorn of his arrogance and pomposity. His corpse, clothed in a shabby suit is displayed to the press following his bungled execution in the small hours of 16 October 1946.

Ribbentrop had connections in England, that "he knew Lord So-and-So". To which Goering replied, "Yes, but the trouble is they also know Ribbentrop."

Britain's Berlin ambassador reported that his new opposite number was "irritating, ignorant and boundlessly conceited". It was some months before the accuracy of his assessment could be demonstrated – Ribbentrop arrived late and spent much of his time back in Germany.

He lived up, or rather down to peoples' expectations. He broke with protocol to give a short speech at Victoria station, before presenting his credentials. It was a brief anti-Communist harangue, suitable for Goebbels

addressing the workers in Berlin, but which bemused and outraged the London press corps in equal measure.

'VON BRICKENDROP'

In Durham Cathedral he heard the first bars of the hymn 'Glorious things of thee are spoken' – which uses the tune of *Deutschland über Alles* – and snapped out a Nazi salute. His arm got him into deeper water when he breached protocol again, to give the Nazi salute to King George VI.

Dubbed 'von Brickendrop', he was an irresistible figure of fun for London's cartoonists. Soon the whole of Britain seemed to be against him, from the capital's

high society to sniggering provincial paperboys. He was furious that his 15-year-old son Rudolf was not allowed into Eton: he was sent to Westminster instead – and was thus to become the only old boy of the school to serve with the *SS-Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* during World War II, winning the Knight's Cross in the process.

It took months for the fact that he was the butt of British humour to penetrate Ribbentrop's rhino-thick hide. Annelies was more sensitive, and became extremely bitter at what she saw as British hostility. When it finally sank in, he became implacably hostile to Britain; the Italian foreign minister Count Ciano described how he returned to Berlin with the fury of a woman scorned. This came just at the time the British government fell into the hands of Neville Chamberlain and the appeasers.

Appointed Reichs Minister for foreign affairs in 1938, Ribbentrop was literally Hitler's mouthpiece in assembling the 'Pact of Steel', the Berlin-Tokyo-Rome Axis. He went to Moscow in 1939 to put his name to the Nazi-Soviet Pact. All the time he spouted hatred of Britain, arguing that the British were so decadent they would accept any settlement in Europe Hitler chose to present. He made no concessions to the regular machinery of diplomacy; contacts between his office and the ministries of neutral nations were so rare that by the time unofficial peace feelers were put out in late 1944, it was too late to develop anything substantial before the Red Army was at the gates of Berlin. His career as foreign minister was best summed up by a joke that circulated in 1944: his officials planned to honour him with a jewel-encrusted box containing copies of all the international treaties he had signed, only to realise at the last minute that Germany had broken every one of them.

HE DIED AS HE HAD LIVED

As the thousand-year Reich disintegrated around him, Hitler had less and less time for his foreign minister. Ribbentrop's poor grasp of international affairs in 1945 speaks for itself. Appalled that Admiral Doenitz declined to confirm him in his non-job in May 1945, he wrote a memo to the new head of state suggesting that they create an independent state of Schleswig-Holstein. The Allies might recognise it as a separate country and it could form the basis for a rebirth of national socialism. Doenitz ignored him, Germany surrendered and Ribbentrop went into hiding. Captured in June, he embarrassed his fellow accused at Nuremberg by his pathetic denials and eagerness to please.

Even his execution went wrong: when he was finally hanged, his neck did not break and witnesses saw his body convulse for over ten minutes before the salesman-turned-Foreign Minister finally died.



Ribbentrop-Molotov The Steel Pact

The non-aggression pact with Moscow was Ribbentrop's greatest coup. Valid for 10 years, the treaty was signed in Moscow on 23 August 1939.

The treaty was a temporary departure for Nazi foreign policy, normally driven by ideological and racial expedients. This time military and political considerations were to the fore. The pact neutralised any Soviet military

threat from the East; it stymied attempts by France and England to encircle Germany in a ring of hostile alliances, and it gave the Nazis opportunities to gain more territory – at Polish expense.

The non-aggression pact was signed alongside a trade agreement. The Soviets would supply Germany with raw materials and food stuffs, neutralising the threat of a British embargo.

But there was a secret protocol to the treaty providing for the partition of Poland and further demarcations of spheres of influence in Finland, the Baltic and in eastern Europe. Not surprisingly, the existence of this protocol was denied by the Soviets until 1989.

Stalin probably expected the Nazis to honour the treaty over its full term – unlike Hitler who

knew it was a short-term expedient. The Soviet leader welcomed being brought back into the mainstream of European politics, and the prospect of having a broad buffer zone from which Moscow could calmly watch the laceration of the Capitalist states in the West was also appealing. But Stalin had made one major mistake: he had trusted Hitler.

Right: Ribbentrop signing the non-aggression pact with Russia. The pact was vital for protecting Germany's rear as Hitler turned his attentions on Poland. It is unlikely that the empty-headed Ribbentrop understood the Führer's end-game and rather saw the treaty as strengthening the ties established by the Rapallo agreement of April 1922.



Above and below: Having dealt with any potential Soviet threat by diplomacy, Hitler was free to invade Poland. Seventeen days after the beginning of the campaign, the secret protocols of the non-aggression pact became obvious: the Red Army also attacked the Poles. Within days, Poland ceased to exist and the totalitarian states now divided Polish territory between them.



HITLER'S THIRD REICH 25



Battle of the

The Battle of the Atlantic was fought with a brutal mix of high-technology, low cunning and bravery on both sides. Thousands of merchant seamen lost their lives to the U-Boats – but the majority of German submariners, like the crew of this type IX boat sunk by US Navy carrier aircraft, also died in action.

The most critical battle of the war took place not on the European mainland but across thousands of miles of ocean, as Germany tried to strangle the supply lines to Britain.

HITLER'S 'Z-PLAN', the Nazis' insanely ambitious naval construction programme, called for a fleet of 250 submarines by 1943. But this was not the main striking force: the Kriegsmarine was to have two squadrons of giant battleships, armoured behemoths capable of destroying any other warship in the world. Kapitän z.S. Karl Dönitz, Führer der Uboote, despaired. The High Command's obsession with battleships delayed his submarines and was, in his view, irrelevant. Dönitz believed that the new submarines developed in the 1920s offered a realistic prospect of blockading Britain. He had served in submarines

during World War I, ending his war in command of UB-68 which was sunk in action with an Allied convoy off Sicily. Dönitz was given command of Germany's first post-war submarine flotilla in 1935 and set about training a new U-boat fleet that could succeed where his generation had – by a narrow margin – failed.

BUILDING PROGRAMME

Hitler was still lying to his naval commanders as late as the summer of 1939, telling Admiral Raeder that there was little danger of war. The Kriegsmarine's building schedule was based on the assumption that peace would continue until the mid-1940s. When Britain and France declared war in

September 1939 the great surface fleet had yet to be built. And Dönitz, promoted to Konteradmiral (Rear-Admiral) and BdU (Befehlshaber der Uboote – Commander-in-Chief submarines) had only 46 operational submarines of which more than half were the coastal 'ducks' (Type IIs) primarily used for training.

Most Allied merchantships sunk by U-boats during World War I were sent to the bottom almost in sight of land. The submarines congregated around focal points – traditional landmarks and the approaches to major ports. Many of their victims were sunk by gunfire on the surface, until the use of 'Q-ships' – merchantmen with hidden guns – led them to rely on



Atlantic

Convoys were the only real protection against submarine attack, allowing small numbers of escorts to protect large numbers of merchant ships. But few escorts were available at the beginning of the war, and they were largely impotent against Admiral Dönitz's highly-trained U-Boat crews.

their limited supply of torpedoes. After the war Dönitz thought deeply about how to improve U-boat tactics. Once in control of Hitler's U-boats, he tested the concept of 'wolf pack' attacks: co-ordinated strikes by groups of submarines. Initially he tried 'command U-boats' that would control an operation like the flagship of a battleship squadron; but this proved impractical.

Instead, he managed the submarines by radio from his shore-based headquarters. It worked in the Baltic. And in 1939 it worked on exercise in the Atlantic.

While the Royal Navy put its faith in ASDIC (sonar) to locate submerged submarines, Dönitz publicly advocated the technique he had learned in World War I:

a night attack on the surface. In 1939 he published a book, describing these methods, how the small silhouette of a submarine would be hard to see at night, and how the surfaced submarine of the 1930s enjoyed a considerably higher speed than the average merchant ship. No-one in Britain appears to have noticed.

U-BOAT TACTICS

At the outbreak of war, some 3,000 ocean-going merchant ships flew the British flag and another 1,000 coasters plied the waters around the UK: a combined total of 17.5 million tonnes of shipping. The ships were organised into convoys, typically protected by four to six escorts armed with depth-charges. Britain could not even feed its

population, let alone manufacture weapons and fight a war if the flow of imports stopped. If Dönitz's U-boats could win the Battle of the Atlantic, Hitler would win the war.

It was soon apparent that Germany's small surface fleet could not inflict serious damage on the convoys. The heavy cruiser *Hipper* and the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* snapped up a number of ships on forays into the North Atlantic, but only the 'pocket battleships' were purpose-built for such missions. Scheer's five-month raid sank 16 ships for 100,000 tonnes and like her short-lived sistership *Graf Spee* kept a large number of otherwise unemployed Allied cruisers very busy. The prospect of a German battleship (or two)

getting amongst a convoy kept British naval staff awake at night; but although there were some close shaves, Hitler's big ships failed to land a significant blow. When massacres did occur, it was Dönitz's U-boats putting his pre-war theory into deadly practice. For instance, in October 1940 the convoy SC7 was attacked by a 'wolf pack' including 'aces' Kretschmer, Schepke, Endrass and Frauenheim. Twenty ships went to the bottom in a single night.

The 'aces' were the new heroes of the Nazi pantheon: young, aggressive skippers prepared to attack on the surface and close to point-blank range before firing their torpedoes. The top three, Kretschmer, Luth and Topp sank 121 ships (687,000 grt) between them. As with



Above: Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz had absolute faith in the supremacy of the U-boat. Hitler and the Naval High Command did not listen to him until it was too late.

fighter pilots, it was the small number of 'aces' who inflicted most of the damage: the U-boat top-scorers accounted for 70 per cent of sinkings in 1939-41. 'Ace' status required a 'score' of 50,000 tonnes (later increased to 100,000) and was recognised by the award of the Ritterkreuz (Knight's Cross). And as triumphant captains returned to port in triumph, white caps perched at a jaunty angle, their crews were awarded medals too – on the dockside by Dönitz in person. He would continue to greet his men as they made port, through the 'happy time' and into the grim months of 1943 when losses soared to unsustainable levels. Dönitz was an inspiration to the U-boat men, his praise desired, his anger dreaded.

HUNGRY FOR SUCCESS

There was a downside to the 'ace' system of course: it led to the 'sore throat' phenomenon in which skippers took grave risks to get the extra tonnage needed to grace their necks with a Ritterkreuz. Scores were inflated. All eyes were focused on tonnage, the sole measure of success. This was as detrimental to the High Command as to the individual captains. When monthly tonnage 'scores' fell off in the critical mid-Atlantic area, Dönitz dispatched submarines to less well-defended areas, inflicting sudden bursts of damage in the South Atlantic, Indian Ocean or Caribbean.

His tonnage totals revived, but he had failed to address the real issue: the increasing effectiveness of the Allied escorts.

The fall of France ushered in what U-boat crews would look back on as the 'happy time'. Based on the Atlantic coast, the submarines no longer had to make the long passage across the North Sea and around Scotland: the number of operational U-boats in mid-Atlantic was increased by about 25 per cent. This compensated for the tantalisingly slow pace of submarine construction. U-boat losses exceeded new production throughout 1940 and by January 1941 there were just 22 boats operational: fewer than the number available in September 1939. From July 1940 until the worsening winter weather – and more numerous escort vessels – began to have effect, the U-boats had a clear run. U-boats sank 520 ships (2.4 million tonnes) by December 1940. They would have sunk considerably more, but German torpedoes were unreliable and the problem not traced until late 1941.

THREAT FROM THE AIR

Airbases in Canada, Iceland and the British west coast enabled RAF Coastal Command to maintain anti-submarine patrols at either end of the convoys' journey. But not in the middle. Once a convoy reached the 'Atlantic gap' it was on its own. Without the threat of aerial attack during the day, the U-boats could assemble in lines up to 12 nautical miles apart; positioned across likely convoy routes, they assembled into informal groups



American Convoys

From 1942 the HX designation was applied to convoys from New York, as more war material was dispatched direct from US industry to the United Kingdom.

Gulf Coast

Most of the vital oil supplies used in Europe came across the Atlantic, with a large proportion shipping from Texas via the Gulf of Mexico.

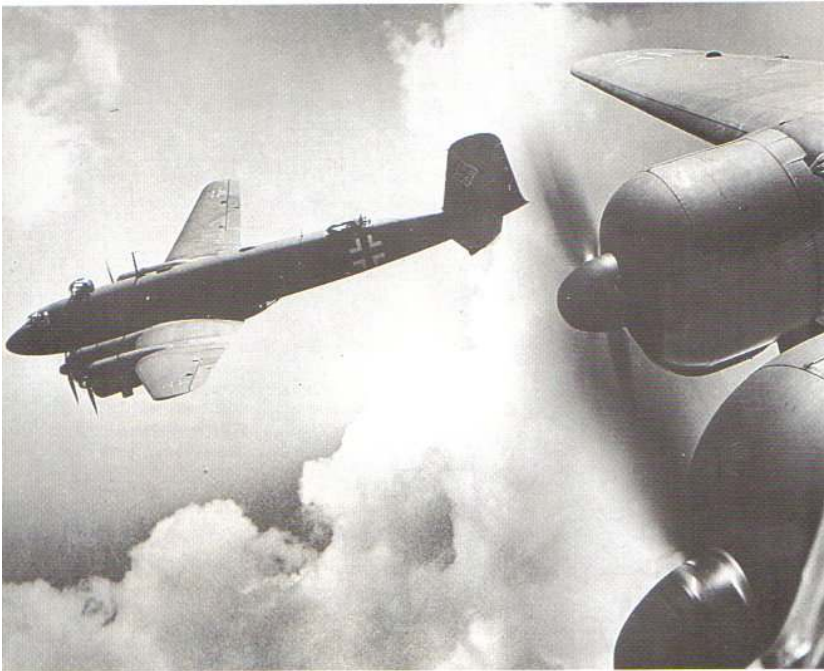
Caribbean convoys

U-Boats operating on the US coast moved down into the Caribbean after the US Navy finally began to introduce convoys. They found ships sailing on local routes particularly easy targets.

Atlantic Battle Zone

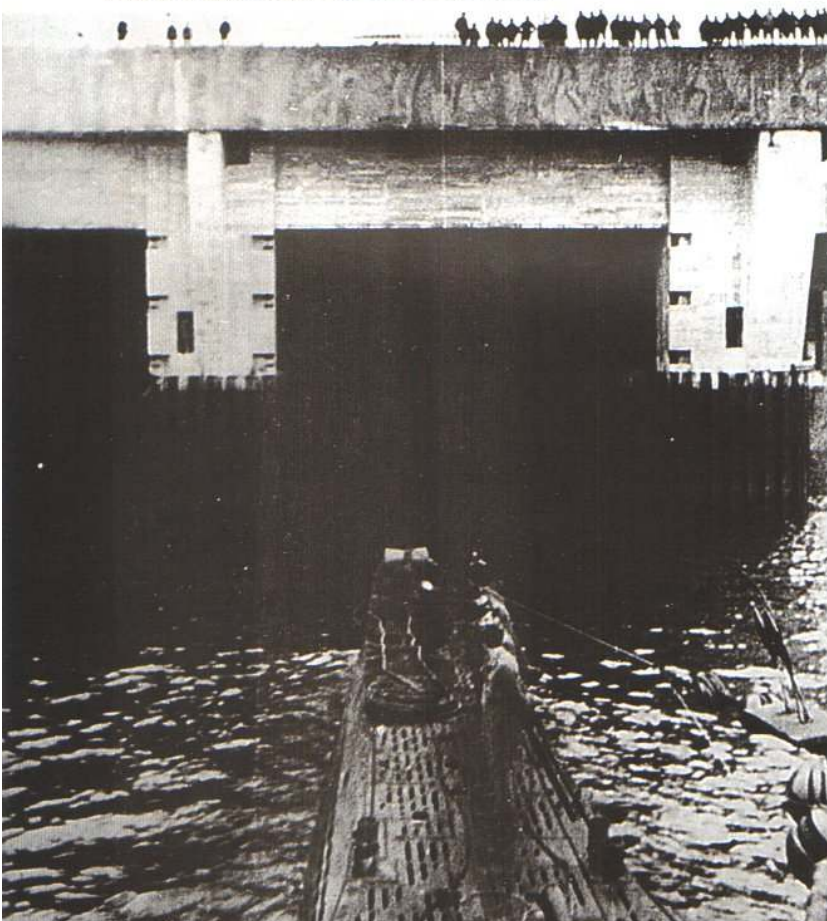


HITLER'S BATTLES 9



Above: Air power was vital in the Battle of the Atlantic. German Focke Wulf Fw 200 Condors enjoyed considerable success early in the war, in spite of the fact that there were rarely more than 12 available for operations. This was because the airframe, designed as an airliner, often suffered catastrophic failure in the stress of combat flying.

Below: The defeat of France gave the Kriegsmarine access to the French Atlantic ports. U-Boats now had a much shorter journey out into the Atlantic, and could stay on patrol 10 days longer. However, the ports were vulnerable to British air attack, and massive concrete bunkers were built to house and protect the U-Boat flotillas.



named after pirates or characters from Norse mythology. One or two U-boats would be nominated as shadowers, reporting to Dönitz's headquarters from where the BdU would co-ordinate the battle. It generated a lot of radio traffic, which would eventually contribute to the submarines' defeat, but until the codes were broken and direction-finding equipment perfected, Dönitz's system worked well.

The Battle of the Atlantic was dramatically changed after December 1941 when Hitler declared war on the United States. Dönitz anticipated his chief's decision, sending five long-range boats to the US coast 48 hours before the declaration.

In some respects this merely formalised an existing state of war in the north Atlantic: US warships had attacked German submarines, provided escorts for convoys, shadowed U-boats with aircraft and surface ships, broadcasting their location to the British, and repaired both merchantships and warships in US harbours. However, Hitler's fatal gesture added the world's greatest industrial power to his enemies. Now Dönitz's men would have to sink merchant ships faster than the whole world could build them.

WAR WITH AMERICA

By the end of 1941 some 153 U-boats had seen action. Forty-nine of them (32 per cent) had been lost, taking 1,322 U-boat men with them; 828 submariners were rescued by the Allies and sent to POW camps. They sank 1,124 merchant ships for a total of 5.3 million tonnes and killed nearly 10,000 Allied merchant sailors. However, the very success of German forces ashore increased the opposition afloat: much of the Norwegian, Dutch and Danish merchant fleets escaped to continue the fight. This added some four million tonnes of shipping, which, together with another two million tonnes of new construction, meant that the Allied merchant fleet grew to over 20 million

tonnes over the same period!

Nevertheless, Britain suffered severe shortages and stringent rationing was required. Imports were approximately 60 million tonnes in 1939, falling to 45 million tonnes in 1940 and just 31 million tonnes in 1941. Priority went to oil and strategic materials: vegetable gardens were dug in the most unlikely places to maximise food production.

CONVOY MASSACRE

After the war, Churchill claimed that the only thing that had really worried him was the Battle of the Atlantic. The genuine fears of the government and the Royal Navy, the universal impact of rationing and horror stories like the destruction of convoy SC-7 created an enduring impression. But impressions can be deceptive. For every convoy massacre, many others reached Britain without serious loss. By December 1941 the British had sailed some 900 convoys: and of 12,000 inbound ships, the U-boats had sunk less than 300. Dönitz's obsession with tonnage painted a misleading picture.

And by this time, the best of the pre-war trained U-boat men were at the bottom of the Atlantic in the shattered hulls of their 'iron coffins'. Few 'aces' enjoyed their glory for long. Endrass was lost in the same month as the attack on SC-7 attacking the Gibraltar convoy HG76. That battle earned Gerhard Bigalk the *Ritterkreuz* for sinking the British escort carrier *Audacity* and Klaus Scholtz received the same for reaching 61,760 tonnes. But it had been a bloody defeat: apart from the carrier, the U-boats claimed only three small freighters from the convoy. Dönitz had lost five U-boats including the much-fêted Endrass in U-567. (One, U-127 had in fact been caught by the destroyer escorts of a Royal Navy task force in the same area.) But whether it was four or five, the U-boats could not afford to lose one of their number for every merchantmen sunk. Germany was losing the Battle of the Atlantic.

DEATH OF THE BISMARCK



Above: At the time of her launch, Germany claimed Bismarck was a 35,000-tonne ship. In fact, at full load both Bismarck and her sister Tirpitz displaced more than 50,000 tonnes.

Below: The Bismarck and the Prinz Eugen refuelled at Bergen fiord before setting off into the Atlantic via the Denmark straight. Despite the stormy, foggy weather the German squadron was picked up on radar by two British heavy cruisers, and the chase was on.



Right: Bismarck was armed with eight 38-cm (15-inch) guns. The battleship's broad beam made her a very steady gun platform even in rough seas, and her fire-control equipment was excellent.

Below: Bismarck unleashes a broadside against the Hood. The old British battlecruiser had thinly-armoured decks, and the plunging German fire soon penetrated her magazines. Within five minutes, the Hood had blown up. Three of her 1,400 crew survived.



KMS *BISMARCK* was launched by the Iron Chancellor's great grand-daughter on 14 February 1939. From completion to destruction the huge battleship lasted only nine months, eight of which were spent on training. When she slipped out of the Baltic on 20 May 1941, escorted by the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, her task was to disrupt the British supply line in the Atlantic.

The Royal Navy was very conscious of the threat, and detailed considerable resources to neutralise her. Initially shadowed by the cruisers *Suffolk* and *Norfolk*, the German squadron was intercepted by the powerful battlecruiser HMS *Hood* and the new battleship HMS *Prince of Wales*.

Hood sunk

The meeting was a disaster for the Royal Navy. The *Hood* was sunk with virtually all hands and *Prince of Wales* was damaged and had to withdraw. No more serious blow was made by German warships to the British navy in the whole of WWII. But *Bismarck* had been hit below the water line, and had lost fuel. Admiral Lütjens, the German commander, ordered *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen* to proceed independently to Brest.

In retrospect Lütjens should have returned to Norwegian waters, perhaps polishing off the *Prince of Wales* on the way. He could then have waited until the *Bismarck*'s sister-ship *Tirpitz* was completed. The two massive battleships could then have tried to break out into the Atlantic again.

Although Lütjens succeeded in shaking off the shadowing British cruisers, she was sighted again by a Catalina flying boat on the morning of 26 May. By then she was so far from the British Home Fleet that only a carrier strike could touch her before she reached friendly air cover. Launched from HMS *Ark Royal*, a strike by 15 Swordfish disabled the *Bismarck*'s steering gear.

Unable to steer, the *Bismarck* was attacked mid-morning on the 27 May by the Home Fleet battleships HMS *Rodney* and HMS *King George V*. Within half an hour the German ship had been battered into a ruin by 14-inch and 16-inch shells. The heavy cruiser *Devonshire* was then called in to administer the coup de grace.

After taking three torpedoes the *Bismarck* sank by the stern, taking Admiral Lütjens and virtually the whole of her complement of 2,192 men to the bottom.



Below: HMS *Dorsetshire*'s torpedoes administered the Bismarck's coup de grace. However, British efforts to rescue survivors were aborted after a U-Boat report, and only about 100 of the battleship's crew were picked up.





U-Boat Aces – The Doomed Heroes

As with fighter pilots, a relatively small number of 'ace' commanders sank a high proportion of Allied shipping. Thirty-two had scores above 100,000 tonnes, the most successful being Otto Kretschmer who sank 44 ships of 266,000 tonnes. A further 53 commanders topped 50,000 tonnes. Between them, these 87 skippers sank more than 1,500 Allied ships totalling eight and a half million tonnes.

There was no one typical kind of U-Boat commander. Some –

especially those with pre-war training – were highly professional killers. Others were former merchant seamen who were often equally skilful seamen, but who lacked the Prussian stiffness of the regular navy men. Towards the end of the war, numbers were filled out with young, highly committed Nazis, who in the words of one British officer "were perfectly bloody". Whatever their type, however, few who commanded the 'Iron Coffins' were to survive the war unscathed.



Guenther Prien

Dönitz's favourite commander Prien was a committed Nazi. He sank the battleship *Royal Oak* and his U-47 went on to sink 30 ships of 165,000 tonnes. Prien's boat disappeared on 7/8 March 1941 while attacking Convoy OB 293. It may have been sunk by the British destroyer HMS *Wolverine*.



Joachim Schepke

Trained alongside Prien, Schepke was a more buccaneering type of skipper. After commanding two small Type II boats, he took command of U-100 in May 1940 and sank 37 ships of 156,000 tonnes. Schepke was killed ten days after Prien when U-100 was rammed by HMS *Vanoc*.



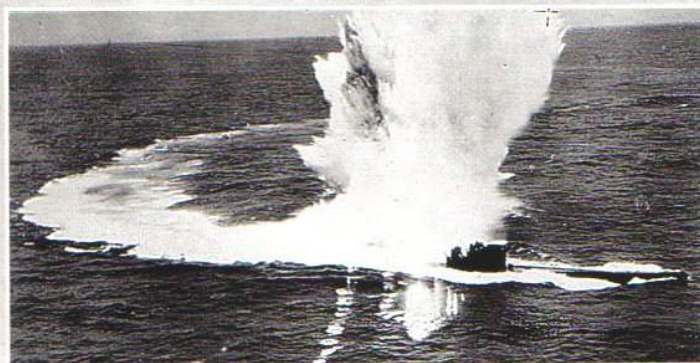
Erich Topp

Third highest scoring 'ace', Topp served from the beginning of the war to the end. Most of his 33 kills came while in command of U-552. In 1945 he made the only operational patrol with the advanced new Type XXI boat. He rejoined the Bundesmarine in 1958, retiring in 1969 as a Rear Admiral.



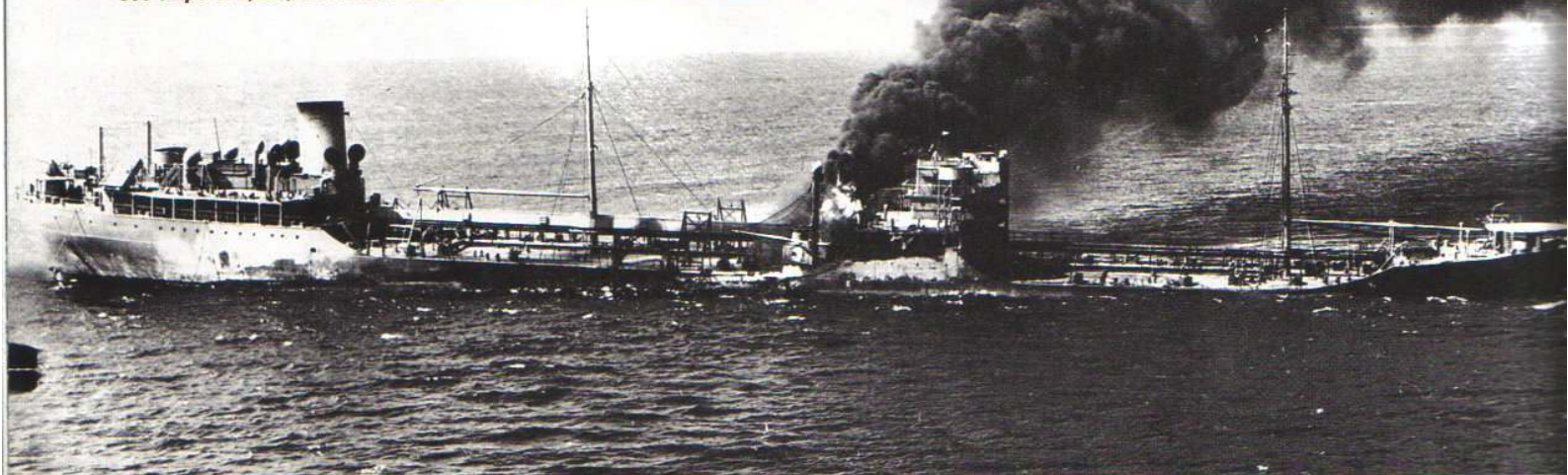
Otto von Bülow

A middle-ranking 'ace', von Bülow transferred to the U-Boat arm in 1940. He commanded U-404 on six patrols in 1942 and 1943, sinking 14 ships of 70,500 tonnes. In 1945 he led a naval assault battalion. After the war von Bülow joined the Bundesmarine, and commanded a destroyer squadron in 1963.



Left: By the end of 1941 effective submarine counter-measures were beginning to take effect, although results would not become obvious until 1943. Aircraft and airborne radar forced the U-boats to submerge, where their performance was limited. By the end of 1942 Dönitz was arming his boats with a large number of anti-aircraft guns, and skippers would often stay on the surface to fight it out.

Below: An American tanker blazes off the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. It took the US Navy a long time and considerable bitter experience to apply the anti-submarine tactics learned by the British and Canadians in the North Atlantic. Until they did, the U-Boats revelled in a second 'Happy Time'. In the first six months after Pearl Harbor, they sank over 360 ships of 2,250,000 tonnes off the US coast and in the Caribbean.





Surface Raiders



Above: Convoys were generally used on the North Atlantic, but in more distant waters ships often sailed independently. In the first two years of the war many fell victim to German auxiliary raiders – disguised merchantmen fitted with hidden armament.

Right: The Kriegsmarine's heavy surface units were not ideal for surface raiding, though a few made successful cruises. The heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper, seen here sinking the British destroyer HMS Glowworm during the invasion of Norway, made one fruitless cruise at the end of 1940. In a more successful operation in February 1941, she intercepted a convoy off West Africa, sinking seven ships of 30,000 tonnes.

As the war opened the woefully unprepared Kriegsmarine had to fall back on stealth for what it lacked in firepower.

The pocket battleships *Graf Spee* and *Admiral Scheer*, and the heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper* enjoyed some early successes.

At the same time the Kriegsmarine utilised armed merchant cruisers to even greater effect. These vessels were designed to look like ordinary merchantmen. But their sheep's clothing concealed very heavy weaponry. Their task was to attack merchant vessels sailing individually. In terms of numbers of vessels

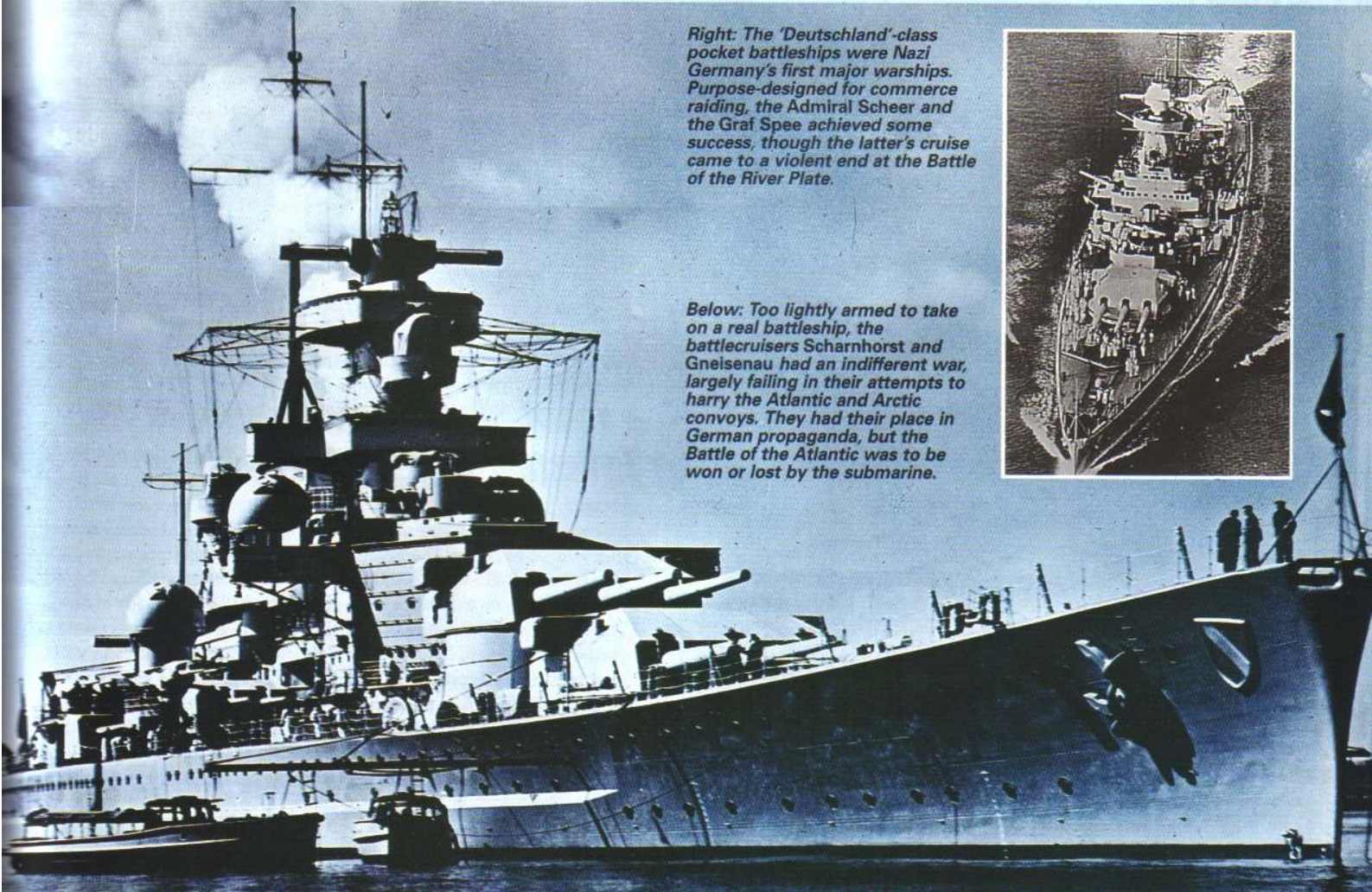
sunk, their effect was not large and they never threatened Allied command of the seas. But their activities did spread alarm, and forced the Royal Navy to devote considerable resources to tracking them down. They achieved most of their successes in distant waters before the end of 1941.

Whilst the activities of the Kriegsmarine's surface raiders made good copy for the propaganda machine, the German navy was never able to concentrate its capital ships to make a decisive difference, and the piecemeal operations of those raiders had little more than nuisance value.



Right: The 'Deutschland'-class pocket battleships were Nazi Germany's first major warships. Purpose-designed for commerce raiding, the Admiral Scheer and the Graf Spee achieved some success, though the latter's cruise came to a violent end at the Battle of the River Plate.

Below: Too lightly armed to take on a real battleship, the battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had an indifferent war, largely failing in their attempts to harry the Atlantic and Arctic convoys. They had their place in German propaganda, but the Battle of the Atlantic was to be won or lost by the submarine.





Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler

Few military formations have earned a reputation for ruthless efficiency and brutality to compare with that of *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*.

IN ITS SHORT but violent existence, between March 1933 and May 1945, the *Leibstandarte* grew from a bodyguard of 120 men protecting the Führer to an outsized armoured division more than 20,000 strong, equipped with the most modern weapons that

German industry could produce. In battle, it was led by some of the toughest and most controversial figures in German military history – men like SS-*Oberführer* Kurt 'Panzer' Meyer, SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Joachim 'Jochen' Peiper and SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Max Wünsche. Undoubtedly superb leaders, they allied their

undoubted skills as soldiers with a ruthless determination and the ability to commit atrocities without flinching.

The man who did most to shape the character of *Leibstandarte* was its first commanding officer, Josef 'Sepp' Dietrich. In German, 'dietrich' is slang for a skeleton key, so to honour their commander the

division adopted a shield with a key as its insignia.

The soldiers and officers of the *Leibstandarte* initially wore the distinctive black uniform of the *Allgemeine SS*, complete with *Totenkopf* or Death's Head cap badge. The first armed SS guard unit was the *SS-Stabswache Berlin*, later renamed the *Wachtbataillon Berlin*.



"The Leibstandarte has taken the SS spirit to the extreme. They behave as if they have the ear of God Almighty as well as His exclusive blessings and approval"

**Obergruppenführer
Gottlieb Berger
Head of the SS
Hauptamt
1941**

This became the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (SS Bodyguard Regiment Adolf Hitler) in September 1933. Two months later, on the tenth anniversary of the Munich Putsch, its members took an oath of personal allegiance to Adolf Hitler.

In the early days, the main purpose of the *Leibstandarte* was ceremonial – standing like black statues outside the main buildings in Berlin or executing crisp drill movements as honour guards for visiting VIPs. But its capacity for violent action was never far from the surface. In June 1934 Dietrich and his men – using weapons and transport supplied by the Army – were used by the Nazi party in 'the Night of the Long Knives', the bloody purge which eliminated senior *Sturmabteilung* leaders and other political enemies.

ARMED SS

When it was decided to set up a private Nazi army, the *Leibstandarte* provided the core of the new 'armed SS'. In December 1934 it was expanded to regimental size and began to move away from its political bodyguard function to a more conventional military role. It participated in the bloodless occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936, and a motorised battalion under Sepp Dietrich took part in the invasion of Austria in March 1938.

When war broke out in September 1939, the *Leibstandarte* was organised as a motorised infantry regiment. By



Above: The SS was looked on with suspicion by the Army, but as soon as the fighting prowess of units like the *Leibstandarte* became clear they were welcomed by *Wehrmacht* commanders.

Right: Jochen Peiper, one of the most celebrated (or infamous) of all *Leibstandarte* officers.

this time, the armed or *Waffen-SS* was wearing field grey uniform like the army. However, unlike army units its soldiers were also equipped with a range of well-designed camouflaged smocks and helmet covers – which were later to become complete camouflage uniforms.

The *Leibstandarte* was distinguished from other *Waffen-SS* formations by cuff titles worn on the left sleeve of uniform jackets. The *Leibstandarte* cuff title consisted of a strip of black ribbon with a woven silver border and facsimile of the signature 'Adolf Hitler'. In day-to-day usage, the full title *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* was usually contracted to 'LSSAH' or 'LAH'.

On 1 September 1939, LAH





"My Honour is Loyalty"

ALTHOUGH NOTED FOR their fighting spirit, above all else SS men were ideological warriors. Their motto was *Mein Ehre heisst Treue* – 'My Honour is Loyalty'. That loyalty was beyond question, and the prime recipient of their absolute belief was the man to whom they swore a personal oath of allegiance – Adolf Hitler. The Leibstandarte stayed loyal to their Führer to the end, only wavering when he abandoned them in the last days of the war.

Ideology played a major part in SS training. Each man had to attend several lectures every week during which they were indoctrinated into the SS creed. Central to that creed was that the SS was a brotherhood dedicated to creating a new Aryan world, the vanguard of the master race whose destiny it was to rule that world. They were also exposed to Heinrich Himmler's pseudo-Teutonic mythology, but there is some evidence to suggest that few of the fighting SS actually paid more than lip service to the Reichführer's fantasies.

They were trained to be hard – though often that hardness was accompanied by a willingness to commit atrocities. Even so, their belief in the cause meant that Waffen SS units generally fought with suicidal courage and a disdain for death.

Left: The ideal SS warrior was tall and blond, fighting with total conviction for Hitler and the Third Reich. By the end of the war, however, that conviction was diluted as men were conscripted direct into the SS.

had expanded to regimental strength. During the invasion of Poland it was part of General von Reichenau's 10th Army. When the war expanded westwards, LAH linked up with German paratroopers in the Dutch city of Rotterdam. After Holland it was deployed to France and was one of the regiments which drove across northern France to the sea at Boulogne. LAH was expanded to brigade strength in August 1940 and at this time its members were told by their Führer "It will be an honour for you, who bear my name, to lead every German attack".

INTO THE BALKANS

In the spring of 1941 the LAH were transferred from their barracks in Berlin to Sofia the capital of Bulgaria, which was then a German ally. On 6 April 1941 it crossed the border as one of the lead elements in the invasion of southern Yugoslavia. Via Albania, it pushed on into Greece. Moving down the west coast LAH commandeered two caiques (Greek fishing boats) and organised a ferry across the Gulf of Corinth. LAH swung east, linking up with paratroopers of the 2nd *Fallschirmjäger* Regiment who had secured the

Corinth Canal. During the Greek campaign the *Leibstandarte* won a reputation for being hard but fair – a reputation which was to change dramatically on the Eastern Front. Following a victory parade in Athens the unit returned to barracks in Czechoslovakia.

By the opening of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, LAH was a division in name, but not in

strength. Between July and November 1941 it fought non-stop from the Polish border to Kherson near the Black Sea and then along the Sea of Azov to capture Rostov on the Don. However, the Soviet winter counteroffensive pushed LAH out of the city and back over the river Mius, all but destroying the division in the process.

Its performance in the fierce

fighting on the Eastern Front won the *Leibstandarte* considerable respect from the army for its combat ability, but the hardness of its men was also reflected in the increasing number of atrocities they committed.

Below: Men of the Leibstandarte move towards battle before the Battle of Kursk. The SS fought ferociously in the bitter war on the Eastern Front, showing no mercy to its Russian foes.



Hitler's Praetorians

From its creation the SS looked on itself as the standard bearer of National Socialism. The *Leibstandarte* saw itself as an elite within an elite, Hitler's personal Aryan warriors, ready to obey the Führer without question.

Before the war, the SS was an exclusively volunteer force, and its physical entry standards were high (though the educational standards of the average SS man was surprisingly low).

The *Leibstandarte* was especially particular: Sepp Dietrich wanted men not boys, and would not accept anybody younger than 23 years of age. The minimum

height was 180-cm (five feet eleven inches) and recruits had to be in perfect health: a single tooth filling was grounds for rejection. The prospective *Leibstandarte* member also had to prove his Aryan heritage.

Training was along regular army lines, though the SS emphasised fitness even more than the Wehrmacht, and sports played a greater part in the SS man's life. Aggression was highly prized, and exercises emphasised speed and ferocity of attack.

In addition to the normal SS training, the *Leibstandarte* also had to master ceremonial drill – so much so that other units gave them the nickname of 'asphalt warriors'.

Above: Leibstandarte on parade, circa 1933. The officer on the left is Theodor 'Teddy' Wisch, who was one of the founder members of the unit and who was to become Dietrich's successor as commander in 1943. He was seriously wounded during the 1944 battle for Normandy.

Below: An SS band on parade. The Leibstandarte's ceremonial function led many to discount its fighting ability – but not for long after any shooting started.



Above: Hitler inspects the Leibstandarte's barracks at Lichterfelde. The function of SS men like these was to provide the Führer with a force which would obey his orders without question.





LEIBSTANDARTE LEADER



Left: Sepp Dietrich confers with Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt in Normandy. The two men could not have been more unlike, and the aristocratic Prussian General Staff officer had little respect for the military abilities of the former street fighter.

Sepp Dietrich was born in Bavaria in 1892. He was an apprentice butcher before serving as a sergeant in the Imperial German army in World War I. He joined the police after the war, at the same time enlisting in the *Oberland Freikorps*. He saw action in the 1921 campaign to repel the Polish invasion of Silesia. Dietrich joined the SA in 1923 – just in time to take part in the Munich putsch, for which he

was dismissed from the police. After drifting from job to job, he became a full member of the Nazi party in 1928. For a time he was Hitler's driver, which earned him the nickname *Chauffeurska* from his patron.

Dietrich joined the newly formed SS, winning election to the Reichstag in 1930 and being promoted *SS-Brigadeführer* in 1931. In March 1933 he was given command of the

SS-Stabschwache Berlin. This became the *Leibstandarte* in September 1933 and two months later on the tenth anniversary of the Munich Putsch the LSSAH took an oath of personal allegiance to Adolf Hitler.

Hitler once described Dietrich as being a mixture of cunning, ruthlessness and hardness – a word much used in National Socialist propaganda. He was certainly very tough, and instilled

a unique fighting spirit into the LSSAH. He was popular with the men he commanded because he cared for their welfare. However, he was not as highly regarded by the professional Army officers with whom he served as the LSSAH expanded.

Partly this was because he never lost his NCO manner, but mostly it was because he lacked the intellectual capacity for the ranks to which he was elevated. Dietrich was to end the war as *SS-Oberstgruppenführer und Generaloberst der Waffen-SS* in command of an armoured army.

SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS Paul Hausser, who had served with distinction as an officer in the German Army in World War I, said of Dietrich that he "would make a fair Sergeant Major, a better Sergeant and a first-class Corporal". *Generalfeldmarschal* Gerd von Rundstedt described him as "decent, but stupid". A US Army officer who interrogated him after the war said that Dietrich reminded him of "a rather battered bartender".

Vengeance was a major motive: over three days in April 1942 the *Leibstandarte* killed 4,000 Soviet POWs in retaliation for the murder of six of their own.

The mauled LAH was withdrawn to France in June 1942. There it was partly re-equipped with armour and designated a *Panzergrenadier* or armoured infantry division. In this new role it returned to Russia in January 1943 as part of the XXXVIII Panzer Corps under Field Marshal von Manstein. In February 1943, after the fall of Stalingrad, the LAH played a critical part in the battle for Kharkov. Following the battle – Germany's last major victory on the Eastern Front – Josef Goebbels recorded in his diary that Hitler "was exceptionally

happy about the way the *Leibstandarte* was led by Sepp Dietrich. This man has personally performed real feats of heroism".

Dietrich was promoted to command a corps, and between July 1943 and August 1944 LAH was commanded by *SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS* Theodor 'Teddy' Wisch. Wisch took over just in time for the ill fated German counteroffensive at Kursk, Operation Citadel.

KURSK

Leibstandarte was part of the southern pincer attempting to pinch off the Kursk salient. It bypassed Byelgorod and reached Teterevino before being forced to withdraw. In the intense fighting the division knocked out about

500 Soviet tanks.

The Soviet forces moved from the defensive at Kursk to a huge rolling summer and winter offensive. The LAH played a significant part in the relief of the Cherkassy pocket, where 50,000 Germans, including men of the *Waffen-SS* Division *Das Reich*, had been trapped by the Soviet advance. About 35,000 survivors were able to break out and link up with advanced guards of the *Leibstandarte*.

By the beginning of 1944 the division was a shadow of the well-armed, full-strength force that had spearheaded Operation Citadel. It was withdrawn to Western Europe to rest and refit, becoming a fully-fledged Panzer division in the process.

In the summer of 1944 the

1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte* was based near Bruges in Belgium. Following the D-Day landings in Normandy it was ordered to northwest France to form part of the 1st SS Panzer Corps.

NORMANDY MAULING

The LAH suffered badly from Allied fighter and ground attack aircraft, as well as from naval gunfire and continuous action against overwhelming British, Canadian and American forces. By the close of the Battle of Normandy it had been reduced to less than 30 serviceable armoured vehicles. Among the casualties was the seriously wounded Teddy Wisch. From August 1944 to February 1945 command of LAH passed to

HITLER'S WAR MACHINE



SS-Oberführer Wilhelm Mohnke.

The defeat in Normandy did not mean that the fighting days of the LAH were over. Between 16 December and 1 January, 1945 it played a key part in Operation Autumn Fog – the Ardennes Offensive against the US Army. By now the Waffen SS had grown to nearly a million men, enough to provide an entire armoured army for the campaign.

SS PANZER ARMY

The most powerful unit in the Sixth SS Panzer Army, was the 1st SS Panzer Division, which had just re-equipped with massive King Tiger tanks. Spearheading the attack was an LAH *Kampfgruppe* or 'Battle Group' commanded by *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Jochen Peiper. The 5,000 men of *Kampfgruppe* Peiper pushed forward nearly 60 kilometres. It was during this thrust that the *Leibstandarte* was held responsible for the murder of 71 American prisoners of war at the Malmedy cross roads.

Steady Allied pressure halted and finally broke the German attack. The remnants of LAH were withdrawn to Bonn to refit. The Ardennes Offensive had cost the Germans nearly 100,000 dead and the Americans 76,000.

The final battle for the *Leibstandarte* came in January 1945 as the Russians opened their winter offensive into Hungary. It was no longer the elite formation of the early 1940s and included among its reluctant recruits men from factories, the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe. From February 1945 to the end of the war LAH was commanded by *SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS* Otto Kumm.

LAST BATTLES

After a fruitless attempt to recapture the Hungarian oil fields, the Germans withdrew into Austria but were ordered to hold Vienna. When Hitler heard of the withdrawals he flew into a rage. Remote from the battlefield in his bunker in Berlin, he

ordered that the men of SS Divisions *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, *Das Reich*, *Totenkopf* and *Hohenstaufen* should remove their cuff titles and that all promotions and decorations, authorised on Hitler's birthday on 20 April, were to be cancelled.

Sepp Dietrich's reaction was typical and robust. When the commander of the 6th SS Panzer Army received the signal he remarked, "There's your reward for all you've done these past five years". After considering putting all the honours into a chamber pot and sending them to Hitler, he simply ignored the order.

Following the news of Hitler's death, Dietrich ensured that most of the Waffen-SS divisions in the east were able to break contact with the advancing Russians and surrender to the Americans at Steyr in upper Austria.

But the war was not over for the men of the *Leibstandarte*. They might have considered themselves the elite of the German armed forces, but to the Allies, they were all members of the SS. They faced years of captivity in POW cages after the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg determined that the SS was an illegal organisation. Many of its leading lights were tried and sentenced as war criminals, though few served their full terms.

Right: The SS soldier of 1944 was a prototype of the modern infantryman, wearing an effective camouflage uniform and carrying the world's first practical assault rifle, the StG 44 or Sturmgewehr.



Above: Members of Kampfgruppe Peiper move through the snowy Ardennes as the spearhead of the great German winter offensive of 1944. The murder of 71 helpless American PoWs was to add another stain to the Division's already blotted copybook.

Below: The demand for more and more troops saw the SS forming a fighting division from the Hitler Youth. The 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend was formed around a core of Leibstandarte professionals, and the 16 and 17 year olds saw the LSSAH as their parent division.





MEDALS AND ORDERS PART 2

Unlike most Nazi leaders, Heinrich Himmler had no World War I experience. He was acutely aware of his lack of combat decorations, and tried to compensate by wearing party awards. Here, the Reichsführer sports two of the most important Nazi decorations – the Party Badge in Gold at the centre of his left breast pocket and the ribbon of the Blood Order – only worn by those who took part in the 1923 Beerhall Putsch – in his right buttonhole. The medal beneath the party badge is a bronze sports qualification badge.

PARTY FAVOURS

Almost every organisation in the Third Reich – even the civilian ones – had their own uniforms. And wherever uniforms are worn, you will also see a lot of medals, orders and decorations.

NATIONAL Socialists had awards for just about everything. There were medals for long service and good conduct, and medals for bearing children. Awards were given for long party membership, and for exceptional service. There were sports medals and proficiency awards, mementoes of Party rallies and of notable street battles with the Socialists.

Medals serve a number of distinct functions. Whatever your line of work in Hitler's Germany, there was probably a medal for exemplary performance of your duties. But they were more than rewards for service.

Groups who see themselves as 'different' have always used regalia to enhance their identity – from civic dignitaries and masonic lodges to churches and the military.

Each piece of adornment on Nazi uniforms had a message. The combination of uniform, medals, badges and symbols of rank gave an instant picture of just who you were and where you stood in the Nazi hierarchy. It was not unique to Germany, but what was unique to the Third Reich was the extent to which the Party and its awards penetrated every level of Hitler's Reich.

NAZI SYMBOLS



Above: The Eagle Order (properly, the Meritorious Order of the German Eagle) was instituted on 1 May 1937. It was the highest German award for foreigners, and was designed to be conferred upon visiting statesmen and prominent personalities in friendly countries. Six classes of award existed: The Third Class Award (seen here with and without swords) was worn at the neck, while the Fifth Class Award (seen here with swords) was worn on a breast ribbon.



Right: Very different from the rare awards to prominent foreigners, but far more common were the assorted gifts, souvenirs and memorabilia of party occasions. Seen here are an NSDAP notebook and souvenir pen dating from the early 1930s, a party badge imitating an SA Feldzeichen or Standard, a Party membership badge, a badge worn at the Westfalen party meeting in 1936, and a gold medallion commemorating the tenth anniversary of the first Party Day in Weimar.

NAZI SYMBOLS



Above: The SS long service award was instituted on 30 January 1938. Four- and eight-year awards were medals: the 12-year award shown here was a hakenkreuz in silver. If the Third Reich had lasted long enough, the 25-year award would have been the same in Gold.

Right: The Nazis venerated motherhood, and had a special award for especially fertile women. The Cross of Honour of the German Mother was awarded in Bronze for four or five children, silver for six or seven and gold (as seen here) for bearing eight children or more.

Below: The Faithful Service Cross was instituted under the Weimar Republic, but was honoured under the Third Reich. It was awarded to members of the Public Services who had worked for the same concern continuously for 25, 40 or 50 years.





PARTY COMMEMORATIONS

Mass meetings were fundamental to the character of National Socialist Germany. Although the *Parteitage* started in a small way in the 1920s, by the time Hitler came to power in 1933 they had become massive spectacles. Smaller versions also took place in every region, city and town in Germany.

In a state where following the

party line was essential for success, it became politic to wear some sort of emblem to show that you had done your bit for the party. There were plenty to choose from: every meeting of this kind had a badge to wear, usually fairly cheaply stamped out by the thousand and made from cheap plastic, tin plate or aluminium.

Above left: The Party awarded medals to anybody who took part in the *Blumenkriege* – the bloodless occupations of territory in 1938 and 1939. The silver *Medaille zur Erinnerung an den 13. März 1938* commemorates the Anschluss with Austria, while the bronze *Medaille zur Erinnerung an den 1. Oktober 1938* was given to those who occupied the Sudetenland.

Above right: The *Goldenes Parteiabzeichen* or Gold Party Badge could only be worn by the first 100,000 members of the Nazi Party. The larger version was worn on the left breast pocket in uniform; the smaller badge was worn as a lapel button in civilian clothing. The standard party member's badge was smaller without the wreath. It was generally worn as a tie pin in uniform dress.

Right: Party rallies were amongst the most important occasions in the National Socialist calendar. In addition to the massive national party days at Nuremberg, each Gau or administrative district held its own *Gautage*, usually but not always in June. These badges (clockwise starting top left) are from Süd-Hanover Braunschweig in 1936, Koblenz-Trier in 1936, Schleswig-Holstein in 1936, Karlsruhe in 1937, and Süd-Hanover Braunschweig in 1938.

Below: Each Gau consisted of several *Kreise* or districts. These usually held a *Kreistage* a couple of weeks before the *Gautage*. Being smaller affairs, their badges were often cheaply produced out of plastic. These badges commemorate meetings at Cologne in 1939, Ammerland in 1939, Mindelheim in 1935, Iserlohn in 1939 and (centre) Cologne in 1935.



A Z

OF THE THIRD REICH

Hitler Jugend

The Hitler Youth was the Nazi youth movement. Originally known as the Youth League of the NSDAP, it was formed in 1926, and received official sanction at that year's party congress. It was there that Julius Streicher coined the *Hitlerjugend* name, often abbreviated to HJ. Baldur von Schirach became Nazi Youth Leader in 1931.

It became a state agency in 1933, absorbing all other youth

movements in Germany. In April 1939, HJ membership was made compulsory for all German boys and girls. Children joined the *Jungvolk* or *Jungmadel* at the age of 10, moving on to the *Hitlerjugend* proper or the *Bund Deutscher Madel* at the age of 14.

As war broke out, older HJ members assisted with firefighting and air raid protection duties, but by 1943 they were being drafted into combat units.

Initially they manned anti-aircraft gun batteries, but by the end of the war HJ members were serving in the front line.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 12: Nazis and Youth

Right: Hitler Youth trumpeters prepare to sound a fanfare. By 1939 the HJ was the only legal youth organisation in Germany, and membership was compulsory.



Hitler/Stalin Pact

Although Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were diametrically opposed politically, the two dictatorships came to an accord in the months before World War II

began. The Hitler-Stalin Pact was the popular name for the agreement signed by foreign ministers Ribbentrop and Molotov on 23 August 1939. The

secret treaty agreed to divide Europe into two spheres of influence. The pact cleared the way for Germany to invade Poland a month later, and for the

USSR to be given half of the country as spoils.

See also Hitler's Henchmen
Issue 9: Ribbentrop

Hoepner, Erich (1886 - 1944)

Panzer commander who became a conspirator in the July 1944 Plot. Born in Frankfurt-am-Oder, he took part in the monarchist, anti-republican Kapp Putsch in 1920, but remained in the army after it was put down. Along with Guderian, he was one of the leading advocates of mobile warfare in the 1930s. He was one of a number of officers who discussed a coup d'état against Hitler in 1938, but could not find the general support they needed.

Hoepner commanded a corps of Reichenau's 10th Army in Poland, and in France he led one of the Panzer spearheads which attacked through Belgium.

For the invasion of Russia Generaloberst Hoepner was given command of one of the two great *Panzergruppe* – in effect, armoured armies – which formed the spearhead of the German attack. Lead elements of his *Gruppe* got to within sight of the Kremlin before being forced to pull back.

Hoepner was purged after the German armies bogged down in front of Moscow. Hitler wanted him cashiered, but protests from the army meant that he was allowed to resign. Active in the conspiracy against Hitler, he failed to move decisively when the bomb went off. Hoepner was

dismissed from the army by an honour court of his fellow generals; he then became subject to the People's Court. He was tried before Roland Freisler, and executed by hanging in Berlin on 8 August 1944.

Right: Erich Hoepner was a skilful commander whose opposition to Hitler was to bring about his downfall and death.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 20: Opposition to Hitler
See also Hitler's Battles
Issue 11: Operation Barbarossa



Hoffmann, Heinrich (1885 - 1957)

Official photographer for Hitler and the Nazi hierarchy from 1921. Son of the Bavarian court photographer, Hoffmann was a cheerful, sometimes vulgar character. He worked in London in the early years of the century before setting up shop in Munich in 1909. He served as a photographer in the Bavarian Army during World War I.

An early member of the NSDAP, his photographs of Hitler made him enormously wealthy and did much to enhance the Führer's national and international image.

Hoffmann was a talented cameraman, but it was his business acumen which enabled him to build his original Munich studio into a huge photo agency, with offices in several German cities.

As a young girl Hoffmann's daughter Henriette was a favourite of Hitler: later she would marry the HJ leader Baldur von Schirach. Hoffmann's assistant Eva Braun would become Hitler's long term companion (and wife for a day in 1945). Hoffmann introduced Hitler to Dr Theodor Morell, the quack

doctor who became the Führer's personal physician, whose drugs did much to damage Hitler's health and judgement at the end of the war.

After the war Hoffmann was imprisoned for war profiteering and fined most of his immense fortune, but he made money from his memoirs of the Third Reich.

Right: Heinrich Hoffmann's photographic skills created the image of Adolf Hitler and the early Nazi Party. For many years, Hoffmann was the only person allowed to photograph the Führer.



Holidays

The Nazis introduced 11 new holidays that were set aside for parades and celebrations. Some were variants of pagan Nordic festivals, which were seen as more 'Germanic' than Christian holy days. But most were the anniversaries of key Nazi events. The main National Socialist holidays were:

30 Jan: Seizure of Power; **24 Feb:** Foundation of the NSDAP; **16 Mar:** Day of Mourning/ Heroes' Remembrance day;

20 Apr: Hitler's Birthday; **1 May:** Labour Day; **Second Sunday in May:** Mothering Sunday; **June 21:** Summer Solstice; **Sept:** Reich Party Rally at Nuremberg; **Thanksgiving Day:** Autumn Harvest; **9 Nov:** Beer-Hall Putsch Anniversary; **21 Dec:** Winter Solstice.

Right: A parade of Germanic history by members of the 'Strength through Joy' movement is typical of the 'Nordic' pageants inspired by Heinrich Himmler.



Höss, Rudolf Franz (1900 - 1947)

Commandant of Auschwitz, where he was responsible for the killing of over a million victims in addition to tens of thousands who were worked to death.

Born into a strict catholic family, Höss enlisted underage and served with distinction on the Turkish front. After the war he joined the Freikorps Rossbach, becoming an NSDAP member in 1922. In 1923 he was sentenced to 10 years for a political assassination, but was released in 1928. He joined the SS in 1934. He became a guard at Dachau, transferring to Sachsenhausen in 1938.

A good administrator, in 1940

Höss was sent by Himmler to look at the Auschwitz site, and in the rank of SS *Hauptsturmführer* became the first commandant of the camp built there.

Höss oversaw the expansion of the Auschwitz complex, and was the first commandant to use Zyklon-B gas for extermination. He proved to be an efficient manager of the death factory, but in 1943 he resigned after a corruption investigation. By 1944 he was back in command, overseeing the slaughter of 400,000 Hungarian Jews.

Fleeing westwards at the end of the war, he was captured by

the British. In 1946 he was extradited to Poland, where he was convicted of war crimes and executed.

Right: Rudolf Höss did not see himself as a criminal: his superiors had ordered him to kill people, and he never questioned those orders. His only concern was to do it as efficiently as possible and in the process becoming one of the worst mass-murderers in history.

See also The Holocaust

Issue 1: Auschwitz

See also Inside the Third Reich

Issue 7: The SS State



Huber, Kurt (1893 - 1943)

Swiss-born musical theorist and professor of philosophy and psychology at Munich. Huber had been a critic of the Nazis since their early days in Munich, but dislike grew into active opposition in the late 1930s.

The spark was the Nazi abuse of art and tradition which he observed while teaching in Berlin.

A Catholic, he was offended by the anti-clerical nature of National Socialism. He was profoundly opposed to *Gleichschaltung* or

co-ordination – the process by which politics, culture, education, religion were to be controlled and directed by the state into officially approved forms.

One of the movers behind the White Rose resistance movement, he was arrested after students Hans and Sophie Scholl were taken into custody. Huber was charged with drafting a leaflet criticising the government and after interrogation by the Gestapo he was handed over to

a Munich People's Court, where he was tried and found guilty by the infamous judge Roland Freisler. He was guillotined on 13 July 1943.

Right: Kurt Huber's only crime was to write and distribute anti-Nazi leaflets. But in Hitler's Germany that was enough to cost the academic his life.

See also Inside the Third Reich

Issue 20: Opposition to Hitler



Hugenberg, Alfred (1865 - 1951)

Former civil servant, industrialist, banker before World War I and media magnate under the Weimar government. He had interests in newspapers and controlled UFA (*Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft*), Germany's largest film company.

Hugenberg was one of the founders of the Pan German League in the 1890s, and in 1920 entered the Reichstag for the *Deutschnational Volkspartei* (German National People's Party). In 1929 he brought right-wing

interests and parties together to oppose the Young plan which revised Germany's war reparations.

Though Hitler withheld the Nazis from the similar Harzburg Front two years later, Hugenberg's papers were vital to publicising the National Socialist message. When Hitler came to power in January 1933 Hugenberg was appointed Minister for Economics and Agriculture, but in June he was replaced by Walter Darre and Dr Karl Schmitt. In 1941

Hugenberg sold his publishing house to the Nazis, but though a member of the Reichstag until 1945, took no further part in politics. After the war Hugenberg was interned by the British. Tried several times, in 1951 he was finally cleared by a denazification court.

Right: Although Hugenberg's media empire was important in the rise of the Nazis, he was allowed to retain his fortune by the Allies after the war.



A-Z OF THE THIRD REICH

IG Farben

IG Farben was formed in 1924 by a merger of Germany's leading chemical companies, to challenge American commercial dominance in the chemical industry. The name was short for *Interessen Gemeinschaft Farbenindustrie Aktien-gesellschaft* – 'the Community of Interests of Dye Industries, Incorporated'.

Cartels were an important part of the economy of the Third Reich and IG Farben was the biggest. With 900 factories in Germany and the occupied territories the company supplied 85 percent of the Wehrmacht's explosives, and produced 42 key strategic products. These included synthetic lubricating oils and gasoline, synthetic rubber or Buna, methanol, sera, plasticisers, dyestuffs and nickel.

Worldwide, IG Farben was party to 2,000 cartel agreements with the main British, French and American chemical companies, and it controlled 500 firms in 92 countries.

During the war IG Farben constructed synthetic oil and rubber plants at Auschwitz-Monowitz. The plants used slave



labour from the concentration camps. The company paid the SS three Reichsmarks per day for labourers, and one and a half Reichsmarks for children. When workers were no longer productive, they were exterminated using Zyklon-B – an IG Farben product.

At the end of the war 12 IG Farben directors received war crimes convictions, and the cartel was broken up. However,

Above: IG Farben produced the bulk of the German army's explosives and propellants. As with most large industrial concerns, the company's directors had no compunction about using slave labour in its factories.

this has not stopped its components – names like Bayer, Hoechst, Agfa and BASF – from becoming major industrial powers in the modern world.



Above: IG Farben's synthetic oil and rubber plants at Auschwitz were vital to the German war effort. According to evidence given at Nuremberg, at least 25,000 slave labourers were worked to death at the site.

See also The Holocaust
Issue 2: The Body Factory
See also Secret Hitler Files
Issue 7: Hitler's backers

Illustrierter Beobachter

The 'Illustrated Observer' was the picture magazine of the Nazi Party, similar in concept to Picture Post in the United Kingdom and Life in the USA. Published by Eher Verlag, the *Illustrierter Beobachter* first appeared in November 1926 as

a monthly magazine. It had a strongly racist and anti-Semitic content – typically, when Jacob Rosny Rosenstein was considered for the Nobel Prize for Literature his photograph was distorted to give him the appearance of an ape. The article with the

photograph denounced him as "a disgrace to German culture". During the war the *Illustrierter Beobachter* worked to sustain morale with stories about military heroes and winners of the Knight's Cross. The final edition of the magazine appeared on

13 April 1944. Even though the Russians were pressing towards the eastern borders of the Reich and heavy RAF and USAAF raids were hammering German cities, the *Illustrierter Beobachter* continued to push a positive but false message to its readers.

Ilona, Fall

The codename for the proposed plan for an attack on Gibraltar in 1942. If the attack had not been opposed by Spain it would have allowed the Germans to capture Gibraltar and block the western entrance to the Mediterranean. At the same time that Ilona was being considered Hitler also issued orders for plans to be prepared for Anton, the occupation of Vichy France. The codenames Attila and Isabella had previously been used for these operations but were changed. Possibly Attila was

thought to be too grandiose a name for the operation and Isabella too obviously connected with Spain.

Right: General Francisco Franco arrives to meet Hitler on the French border with Spain. The wily Franco kept Spain officially neutral throughout the war, and blocked German plans to capture the key British naval base at Gibraltar.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 10: The Axis



Industrieklub

Based in Dusseldorf, the *Industrieklub* or 'Industry Club' was a small but influential organisation of industrial leaders.

On 27 January 1932 Fritz Thyssen was persuaded to invite Hitler to address the club. He spoke for two and a half hours and though at the

beginning his audience had been sceptical he sat down to loud applause. Within a year, German industrialists led by Gustav Krupp,

and the boards of IG Farben and United German Steel would be pledging millions of marks to the National Socialists.

Internationale Vereinigung Ernster Bibelforscher

The International Organisation of Serious Bible Researchers or IVS was the German branch of the American sect of Jehovah's Witnesses. First established in

the Weimar Republic in 1927, there were 6,034 members when Hitler became Chancellor. Between 1933 and 1935 5,911 were arrested because they

refused to be absorbed into the Nazi state in the *Gleichschaltung* programme and would not take an oath of loyalty to the Führer. They were declared enemies of

the state and more than 2,000 were either executed, worked to death or died of disease and malnutrition in concentration camps.

Iron Front

The *Eiserne Front* was a loose association of centre-left parties and organisations formed on 16 December 1931. Its major participants were members of the Social Democrats, the non-Communist trades unions, the *Reichsbanner* and other workers' groups. The Front's banner had three downwards pointing arrows – symbolising resistance to National Socialism, Communism, and the monarchy. The Iron Front supported von Hindenburg in the 1932 presidential elections, primarily to keep Hitler and the Nazis getting anywhere near

power. Although Hindenburg failed to gain a clear majority at first, he won at the second attempt. However, Hitler was a strong second, polling 30.1% in the first election which increased to 36.8% in the second vote.

Right: The Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold, a Republican defence organisation founded in 1924, was a key faction in the Iron Front. At its peak in the early 1930s it matched the Nazi Party in size, but indecisive leadership meant that it was not able to successfully oppose Hitler.



Jackson, Robert H. (1892 - 1954)

Chief American prosecutor at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. Born in Pennsylvania, Jackson was appointed Attorney General of the United States by Franklin Roosevelt. He devised the 'Lend Lease' strategy which allowed the then neutral United States to provide military assistance to Britain. He was appointed an Associate Justice to the Supreme Court in 1941. President Truman asked Jackson to head the US prosecution team at Nuremberg. He delivered the opening address

on 21 November 1945, saying, "The privilege of opening the first trial in history for crimes against the peace of the world imposes a great responsibility. The four great nations, flushed with victory and stung with injury, stay the hand of vengeance and voluntarily submit their captive enemies to the judgement of the law. Speaking of the Final Solution he said "History does not record a crime perpetrated against so many victims or ever carried out with such calculated cruelty. Our proof will be disgusting, and you will say

I have robbed you of your sleep." In his summation on 26 July 1946, Jackson stated that the accused had been given the kind of trial which they, in their days of pomp and power, never gave to any man.

Right: A long-time adviser to President Roosevelt, Robert Jackson was asked by President Truman to head the American war crimes prosecution team.



See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 35: The Nuremberg Trials

Jagdverbände

Jagdverbände – JV or Hunting Units – were battalion-sized anti-partisan and special operations groups formed by SS commando Otto Skorzeny in 1943. Based in various places in Europe they were named after the operational area, thus there were Eastern, South-Eastern and Western *Jagdverbände*. In 1945 the surviving *Jagdverbände* were grouped as a division under Skorzeny's command and fought as conventional infantry at the Schwedt bridgehead. Some JV veterans served as instructors for the Nazi resistance organisation known as 'Werewolf'. The term was also used for a special unit of Me 262 jet fighters,

in action in the last month of the war. JV 44 was commanded by Adolf Galland, dismissed from his position as General of Fighters. Even though its personnel included some of the most experienced and successful combat pilots the world has ever seen, it was too late to make any difference to the war.

Right: English-speaking German soldiers captured in American uniforms during the Ardennes offensive are executed. These men were 'Werewolves' – special operations units trained by the Jagdverbände to gather intelligence and conduct sabotage operations behind Allied lines.



Japan

Germany's most powerful ally during World War II, though Japanese forces had no part to play in the European war. Sharing a militaristic, nationalistic outlook with the fascist states, the Japanese empire had a number of parallels with Nazi Germany. Notably these included a *volkish* sense of racial destiny, a desire for 'living space' on the mainland of Asia, and increasing hostility towards the USSR and to the Western capitalist powers.

The 1940 three-power agreement brought Japan into

step with the Berlin-Rome Axis.

The Japanese navy's devastating attack at Pearl Harbor was followed by Hitler's declaration of war on the United States. The Führer may have thought that this would encourage the Japanese to join in his war with Russia – which had come to a grinding halt in front of Moscow. But Japan had signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in April of 1941. They stayed out of the war, allowing the Soviets to reduce their forces in the far

east. The fresh divisions from Siberia saved Moscow in 1941, and allowed the Red Army to deploy its full strength against the Germans.

From then on, the Axis powers were in effect fighting two completely separate wars, neither of which they had the industrial muscle to win.

Right: Japan in the 1930s had a great deal in common with the Fascists of Europe, being authoritarian, aggressive and hungry for conquest.



'Jena stop-over'

A pivotal incident in the rise of the Nazis. The Nazi party became a major political force in the early 1930s, but failed to secure a workable majority in the Reichstag. Following the elections in 1932, Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher convinced President von Hindenburg he could strike a deal to share power with the Nazis. Hitler boarded a train from Munich for Berlin with, it is

imagined, a view to negotiating a subordinate position in the Schleicher government. Strasser, a more radical Nazi, favoured striking a deal with von Schleicher. It is reported, however, that Goering and possibly Goebbels took Hitler off the train at Jena outside Berlin and persuaded him that a coalition arrangement would destroy the myth of the Nazi

party and the purity of its demands. Without Nazi backing, Schleicher's government lasted only 52 days and then Hitler became Chancellor.

Right: Goering was a much more dynamic figure in the 1930s than he was later to become, and he played a key part in the political manoeuvring of 1932 which saw the Nazis rise to power.



Jeschonnek, Hans (1899 - 1943)

One of the founding fathers of the Luftwaffe, Hans Jeschonnek served as an infantry officer in World War I before transferring to the air force. A staff officer in the Reichswehr, he worked with Erhard Milch and Ernst Udet under Goering to build up the Luftwaffe once the Nazis came to power. In 1934 he was given command of one of the first clandestine bomber squadrons.

Jeschonnek was Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe at the outbreak of war, and in August 1940 was

promoted Major General. Only two months later he was made General of Fliers and on 1 April 1942 Colonel General. He was heavily involved in all Luftwaffe planning.

In 1943, while serving on the Leadership Staff of the Luftwaffe, He became deeply depressed. The Luftwaffe's poor showing at Stalingrad weighed heavily on his mind, and a further blow was at the refusal to build up sufficient fighter forces to deal with the growing Anglo-American bomber

threat. On 19 August 1943, he committed suicide at the East Prussian headquarters of the Luftwaffe.

Right: An experienced pilot and a highly capable staff officer, Hans Jeschonnek was a less than capable player of the political game. He fell out with Goering and Milch, and was by-passed by Hitler who set up his own Luftwaffe staff. In his suicide note he requested that Goering not attend his funeral.



Jews in Nazi Germany

Jews had long been an integral part of German society. Most were thoroughly assimilated but the fact that they looked on themselves as German first and foremost did not matter to the Nazis. The first anti-Semitic laws were passed in September 1935. In November 1935 a Law of Reich Citizenship defined who was a Jew or a *Mischling* (mixed race).

By April 1938, all Jewish wealth had to be registered with the authorities, and in June all Jewish businesses had to be registered. In October all passports for Jews were stamped with the letter J. The Crystal Night pogrom in November 1938

led to the imprisonment of over 20,000 Jews.

With the outbreak of war a curfew was imposed on Jews. The first deportations began in 1940 and in September 1941 all Jews were obliged to wear a yellow star. In January 1942 the Wannsee Conference proposed the 'Final Solution' of the Jewish problem. In February 1943 the last highly qualified Jewish munitions workers were deported from Berlin.

In April 1945 it was estimated that 250,000 German Jews had perished since 1939, about half of the pre-war Jewish population of Germany.



Above: Jews from Bielefeld are deported to ghettos in the east soon after the start of the war. Most would die in the camps.

See also The Holocaust

Issue 11: Ghettos

Issue 14: Deportations

COMING IN THE NEXT VOLUMES OF **HITLER'S** Third Reich

SECRET HITLER FILES

Hitler at home
Hitler's Putsch



THE HOLOCAUST

Deportations
Buchenwald



HITLER'S HENCHMEN

Julius Streicher
Rudolf Hess

INSIDE THE REICH

Strength through Joy:
Bribing the workforce
with holidays and
adventures



HITLER'S WAR MACHINE

Early Panzers
Pistols and smgs
Fallschirmjäger

NAZI HORRORS

Life and death in the camps
Eugenics and Euthanasia
Non-Jewish genocide

NAZI SYMBOLS

Nazi Eagles
Police insignia
The Swastika



A-TO-Z OF THE THIRD REICH



IN THIS VOLUME OF **HITLER'S** **Third Reich**

SECRET HITLER FILES

Hitler's thirst for vengeance was unquenchable. No-one was immune, be they an old friend or a new enemy.

INSIDE THE THIRD REICH

Hitler's relationship with the German worker was that of con-artist and fall-guy. See just how they were duped.



HITLER'S WAR MACHINE

The *Leibstandarte SS* began as a select bodyguard to the Führer. But by 1945 it had become the Reich's premier fighting force.

HITLER'S BATTLES

Hitler's navy attempted to strangle the life line to Britain in the Battle of the Atlantic. An epic struggle fought below, on and above the water, it raged from the Arctic to beyond Cape Horn.



INSIDE THE THIRD REICH: HITLER'S HENCHMEN

Joachim von Ribbentrop was the Reich's Foreign Minister. But was he really anything more than an ambitious champagne salesman?

NAZI SYMBOLS

Medals, orders and decorations
Part 2: Party favours.



NAZI HORRORS

In 1944 Warsaw rose against the Nazis – so Hitler ordered the annihilation of the city.

